

PC XBOX 360 GBA DS MOBILE PSP PLAYSTATION 2

NOVEMBER 2006 VOLUME 9 ISSUE 8

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING COMPUTER GAMING & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

# NAG

JUST CAUSE PS2 REVIEWED  
FAMILY GUY: THE GAME  
TOP GRAPHICS CARDS REVIEWED  
MOTORSTORM PREVIEWED



## BURNOUT 5

GET READY TO CRASH AND BURN ON THE PS3

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 <p>AVAILABLE EARLY NOVEMBER</p> <p><b>R299<sup>95</sup> EACH</b></p> <p><b>ASSORTED GAMES</b></p> <p>► Neverwinter Nights 2 (60115) ► Splinter Cell Double Agent (60116)</p>	 <p><b>ASSORTED GAMES</b></p> <p>► Brother in Arms Earned in Blood (59966) ► Peter Jackson's King Kong (59967) ► Prince of Persia 3 The Two Thrones (59968) ► Settlers Heritage of Kings Gold Edition (59969) ► Rainbow 6 Lockdown (59970) ► Heroes of Might and Magic 3 and 4 Complete (59965)</p> <p><b>R99<sup>95</sup> EACH</b></p>				



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COMBAT  
THE BELKAN  
WAR** (60117)

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NOVEMBER



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(60119)

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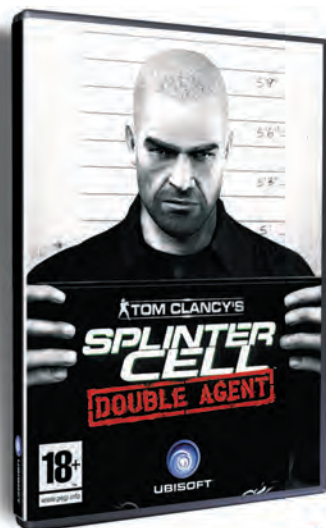






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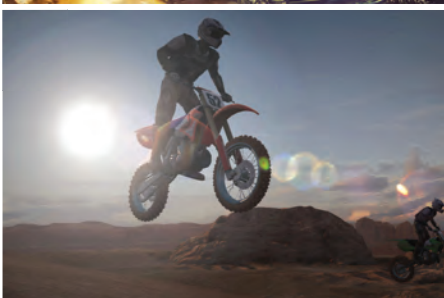
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### FREE GAMES

### MODIFICATIONS - OBLIVION

Better.Imperfect.Water | Etended.Death.Camera | Natural. Environments.v212 | Silence | Spell.Icon.Replace | Texian.Window. Lighting.System.1.0 | wz.inventory.1.6

### TRAILERS

Army of Two | Assassin's Creed | Banjo Kazooie 3 | BioShock | Call of Duty 3 | Dark Messiah Sandbox | Gears of War | Half-Life 2 | Halo Wars Kane and Lynch | Lost Odyssey | Marvel Universe Online | Project Gotham Racing 4 | Rainbow Six Vegas | Shrek 3 | Splinter Cell Double Agent | Stranglehold | The Darkness | Tony Hawk's Project 8 | Viva Pinata | White Knight Story | x06 Montage

### UPDATES & PATCHES UTILITIES

Battlefield 2 v1.3 - v1.4  
Firefox Setup 1.5.0.7.exe





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15.4" LCD WXGA, 1280x800, 16.7M colors  
DVD-Dual Optical Drive  
Microsoft Windows XP Professional  
Weight: 2.76 kg

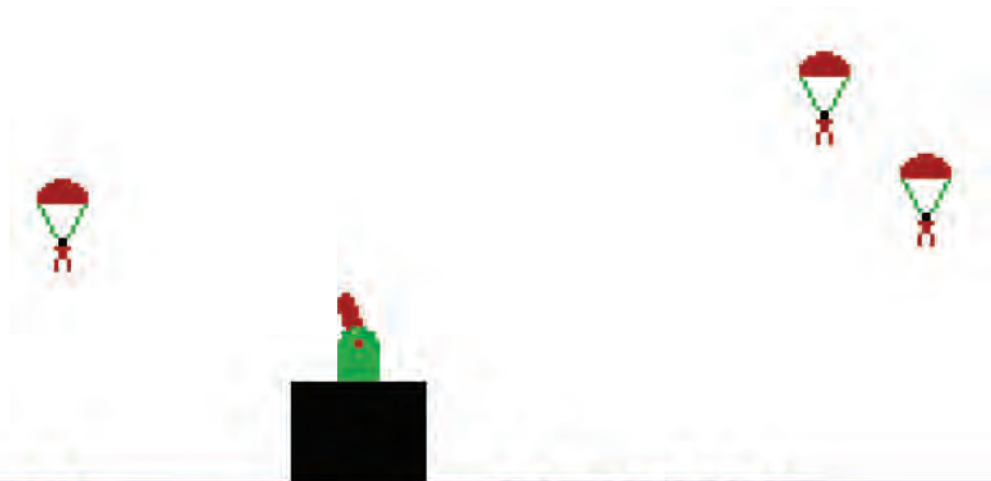


**C**lose, but no cigar. Being the lessee of a 1024 package from Telkom (but not Telkom Internet), I became one of the willing testers for Telkom's 4Mbps trials that started a few months ago. But calling it a trial ended up just confusing the issue. Telkom made the deal clear and simple: 1024 users would still pay hefty rental fees every month, but on the upside, they would experience 4096 speeds. That was technically true. There were times when the line simply rocketed, giving amazing speeds and allowing me to download a 700MB file in an hour. But these events became the exception to the rule, as the 1024 speeds have gradually become worse. How much worse? Well, speeds that sometimes went well over 500Kbps generally settled at paltry 10-30Kbps. On top of that, the service suddenly became highly unreliable. Outages of lines, proxy problems, sites refusing to load... even my phone number got changed without anyone telling me. This caused a stir at my ISP, who thought someone else was using my account illegally, causing them to temporarily block my Internet access. Thanks to the so-called trial period, 1024 has never been worse. It's now harder than ever to connect to Xbox Live, browsing is painful and the whole experience has gone from bad to worse. The one bright point amidst all this chaos is that the latency is much lower – providing you find a competent local server for your game of choice.

It's not just Telkom, though. First-tier ISP Verizon revealed its shapeless packages, which are not priced at a much better rate than anything Telkom offers. Other major ISPs also have some staggering price structures and though they all love to blame it on Telkom, you have to wonder why major corporates such as IS and MWeb don't use their clout to drive prices a little bit lower. Even if my 1024 package ran like a dream, it still costs a hefty R7+ per meg of data. Go over the 30GB mark, and you are likely paying more for bandwidth than for rent.

In other news, be sure to read the first part of our feature detailing the history of the console market. It gives some food for thought for the looming next-gen wars.

James Francis [Editor]



**SCORE:** 10

**HI-SCORE:**

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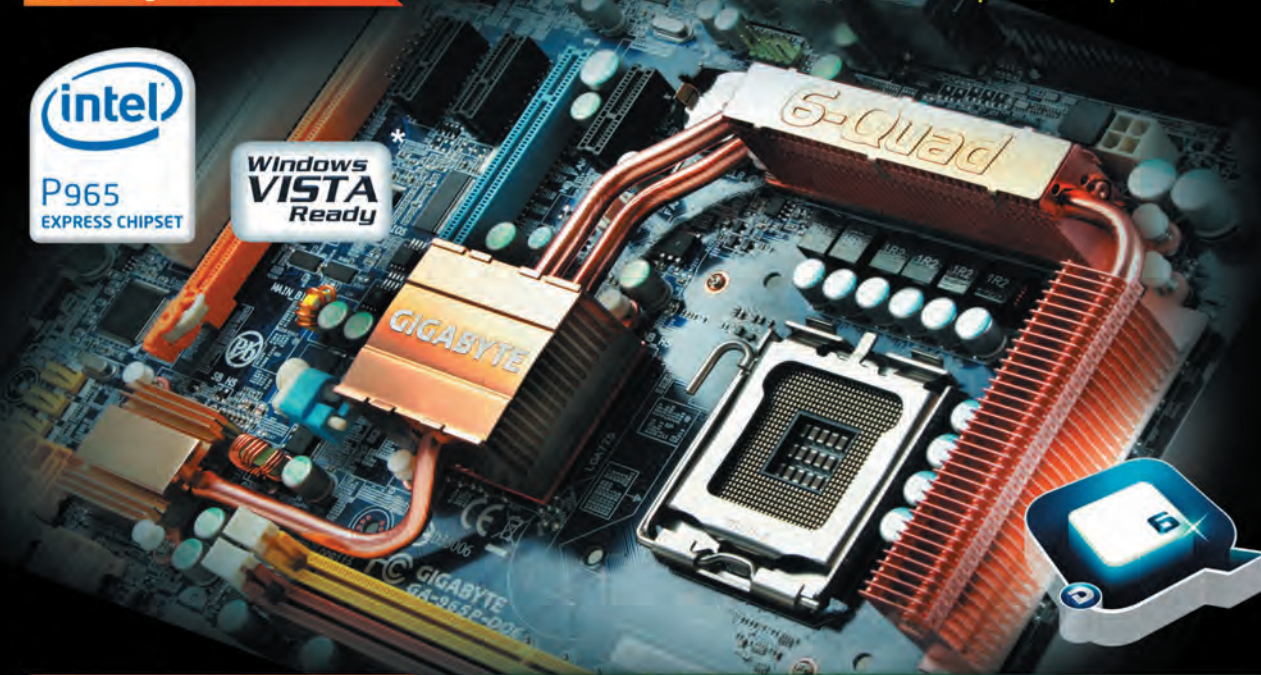
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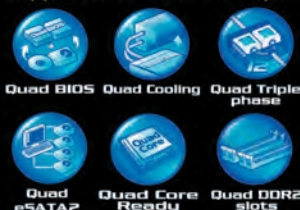
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## LETTER OF THE MOMENT

**FROM:** Binkybozo

**SUBJECT:** Male gamers

I normally do not do this writing thing, but after the past week, I feel compelled to write about what I have experienced. I am a female gamer and I have been gaming since most of you were still a twinkle in your daddy's eyes. I've never really been bothered by comments made by male gamers when it was time to LAN. However, after posts on a local gaming forum and what I heard while at rAge, I guess you could say that I have had it up to here (points to forehead) with the attitude of some male gamers in this county. Some of the G.O.D team was kind enough (and I'm sure paid) to come to South Africa for our little computer expo. First off, my hat off to the sponsors for inviting the female gamers. It was a big boost for all us female gamers in the area.

What got me were the responses on the forums when it was announced that G.O.D. was coming. Statements like "Oh, I am going to wipe the floor with them," or "Let's show them how to play the game" were made. At the expo, when one of the ladies was playing *Quake 4*, there were comments like "Oh, I could beat her" or "Bitch" and of course the classic "oh, he's letting her win so that she doesn't look bad." Why do some male gamers feel compelled to make such statements? Do they think just because they have testosterone running through their veins that it makes them a better player? What is so bad about being beaten by a woman at a game?

I find the comments by some male gamers sad. It is sad that many male gamers do not feel secure enough in themselves that they

feel compelled to make damning comments when beaten or even playing against females in a game. We should be standing together as a gaming community; gaming in South Africa still has a long way to go. It is still a babe in the woods compared to other countries. We must look at the big picture. Think about it; if more women came out to game instead of hiding, then there would be a larger gaming community in South Africa. Instead of fighting, we should be standing together as one, no matter what gender, what age. By standing together we will all benefit in the end.

*This reminds me of a story. A local school's marching band was male-only and notoriously rough and rowdy. But one day, for reasons unexplained, a group of teenage girls decided to join. Most were eventually chased out – all but two. Those two never gave an inch, stuck their ground and were even seen beating band members with blunt instruments when required. The result – in just over a year the band was over a third female and growing. So while the male gamer attitude is disgusting, that's not an excuse for female gamers to hide away. The comments about the G.O.D. members are beyond retarded (they are, after all, multiple Miss Quakecon champions and Miss. X played 132 games in 4 days in Singapore – no player could beat her and claim a \$1,000 bounty). But don't hold your breath waiting for the stupid, threatened and adolescent to change by their own volition. Most people who post on forums don't even have the ability to spell. It's amazing how often random bashing on a keyboard appears to create remotely legible forum opinions.*



The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by EA South Africa. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch.

### IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

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**Important:** Include your details when mailing us or how will you ever get your prize if you win...

### TOPIC FOR NEXT MONTH:

*Did you get to play on a 360? Impressed, unimpressed?*

**FROM:** Chris Rooney

**SUBJECT:** SGS

I whole-heartedly agree with Anton Lines's sentiments regarding SAIX Games Services (SGS). It is the most draconian and oppressive 'regime' that I have ever encountered. I play *Battlefield 2* online regularly, yet the servers were down half the time! Despite repeated requests by players, the administrators would not give an answer on why this was happening. The community then stepped in and purchased a server to prevent this from happening. In any normal country where there are lots of competition, people would move away from rubbish game server providers but since the alternative is M-Web, which has a lower quality service, the majority tend to stick to SGS. When players have a legitimate complaint, they are often shot-down by other players who say "stop whining" or by the admins who say they are looking into it/cannot enforce it. The admins never have a concrete answer to a complaint. The admin attitudes on the forum are disgusting. When gamers complain about admin incompetence, the admins are quick to remind gamers that they are doing it for free and out of their own time, which apparently excuse their incompetence. The

recent resignations of various *Battlefield 2* admins shows their inflated-egos by using the pathetic excuse that they cannot 'take the community whining' anymore, implying that they are Kings and we are accountable to them, rather than the other way round. They took up the job and therefore must be prepared to put up with the community.

*Unfortunately, the quality of local gaming servers won't improve unless bandwidth becomes cheaper or Telkom unbundles the local loop, allowing local gamers to host servers with no real impact on their bandwidth bills at all. The good news is that the 4Mbps trials showed hosting a local server is not that taxing on the larger lines. Still, SGS is an official structure and grants recognition on international rankings. At least, you guys took the initiative and got a server going. At the end of the day, SGS's attitude will just mean many players will leave it the minute they get an alternative.*

**FROM:** G

**SUBJECT:** Star Wars Galaxies community

I started playing *Star Wars Galaxies* about a month after its release. It's a very nice game, for the fans and non-fans such as myself. But reading the official forums



**THE ADMINS ARE QUICK TO REMIND GAMERS THAT THEY ARE DOING IT FOR FREE – WHICH APPARENTLY EXCUSE THEIR INCOMPETENCE**

is the most fascinating thing I could have come across. Why? Everyone is yelling orders and complaints at SOE because the game is not what they want it to be. I thought they were joking at first, but it seems not. I backed up the game a few times, saying this and that with pretty logical arguments, but then I just get yelled at with words such as "ZOMG PWNS YOU ARE NOOB IF YOU LIKE THIS GAME P33N!" I'm aware of the Jedi system being taken away from the community, and made into a starting profession. The old system was strict, and you could only be a good Jedi by 'grinding' for months on end with two hours sleep a night, and no exposure to the sun. I didn't have time for all that, like most South Africans. I also put A LOT of work into pre-NGE, but you don't see me yelling at everyone, running up the walls, trying to boycott Sony with lies such as "I'm going to cancel my account, and get my 200 friends to do the same!" When the NGE was released it wasn't that great, but after a year of patching, things are really picking up again. Why are they complaining so much even today after receiving a GREAT patch recently? When I object to their whining, and moaning, I get told things like "Stop whining about us whiners!" Why play the



game if you hate it so much? The funny thing is, sometimes people come in there and moan who don't even play the game. You need to pay your \$15 subscription fee to actually post on those forums. No, I'm telling you, there's something wrong with that community. What do you guys think about all that nonsense?

*We never played Star Wars Galaxies much, but after the change, a lot of people complained about the Jedi profession. It makes sense, considering one of the big initial hype points for the game were the first few Jedi characters. It required a lot of work to become one. Then SOE changed the system in a rather obvious move to try and compete with World of Warcraft. Was that the right choice? In something as organic as an MMO, making major changes can upset the players a lot. But you have a point: why do they still hang around? Maybe it's the old chestnut that gamers just love to complain. Or maybe a lot of people are just very Star Wars obsessed. Maybe hating Sony is just the new passtime for gamers. Maybe they are all just still upset over Episode 1.*

**FROM:** Gregory Petzer

**SUBJECT:** How computers can save and hurt you

I'm 14 and I've been playing PC games for about 4-5 years. At school I hear all things about kids having sex, taking drugs, smoking, drinking and fighting. I am a real computer boffin and I spend a lot of time playing with computers. I have never had sex, I've only been drunk and tried smoking once, never taken drugs and only been in a fight two times. I hang out in the computer crowd so all we do is play computer games, or go to the movies and stuff. And I have a great social life. On the downside, computers can cause plenty of medical problems such as bad eyesight and also wastes a lot of money. So if you think about it, being a computer boffin and a nerd can in some cases make your life better.

*Unless you listen to Jack Thompson, who says all those violent games will make you homicidal. That's today's lesson from Jack and co. Kids, if you don't want to get involved in sex, drugs, smoking and drinking when you're a teen, you'll become a mass murderer. We recommend that you drop all things computer and game-related, join a gang, and thus avoid becoming a serial killer.*

**FROM:** Quintin Greyling

**SUBJECT:** DS vs. PSP, the battle rages on

As an owner of both the DS and PSP I can definitely see that there is a market for both, as they are distinctly different in their approach. The problem is that most people judge a book by its cover and are under the impression that something that is aesthetically more pleasing is invariably better. I was quite disgusted when most of my mates and colleagues dismissed the DS without taking a second glance at it, purely because the visuals of the DS came a very definite second to that of the PSP. Sure, the PSP has great graphics, but once the novelty fades there had better be something more substantial to validate the hefty price tag of the games. This is where I believe the DS overtakes the PSP in leaps and bounds. It seems as if the DS developers start off knowing that they are actually on the back foot and have to compensate for mediocre graphics with phenomenal gameplay. The games that I have played on the DS has been more responsive, less finicky and just all-round more enjoyable than the majority of the PSP offerings. The DS has just chewed up more of my spare time than the PSP. Then of course, there is the feel of the consoles. Whereas the DS feels sturdy and able to withstand anything shy of a nuclear holocaust, I'm sometimes hesitant to open the case of my PSP in the fear that it will result in yet another dead pixel. I actually spend more time cleaning the fingerprints from the PSP display than I do playing games on it.

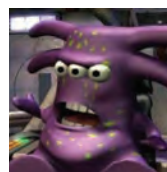
However, there is just so much more that you can do with the PSP. Sure it has its shortcomings, but it's a platform that can play games, movies and music, view photos and more (especially with the new support for flash clips and WMA). Some of this can also be achieved with the DS, but not without having to buy an add-on, which in most cases isn't available locally. There have also been a couple of games that have been thoroughly enjoyable, but this sadly seems to be more the exception than the rule. I'm by no means saying that the remainder of the games were bad, just that they were merely adequate.

*This letter was edited down heavily, but it makes good, sober points about the DS and PSP. In the end, it appears the PSP is a lacking gaming platform, plus UMD movies are in serious decline. Despite that,*

**IT SEEMS AS IF THE DS DEVELOPERS START OFF KNOWING THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY ON THE BACK FOOT AND HAVE TO COMPENSATE FOR MEDIOCRE GRAPHICS WITH PHENOMENAL GAMEPLAY**



**CALLING SCI-FI FANTASY IS LIKE SAYING THAT AN ORANGE IS ACTUALLY A LEMON**



*though, the PSP is selling very well. Sure, the DS is selling incredibly, but it's been a while since any Nintendo handheld hasn't. We honestly don't know what to make of the PSP, but it has proven a lot of its critics wrong. Maybe we're in for a few surprises when the next PSP comes out. Nintendo's advantage is largely due to experience, so if Sony works smart, it could one day deliver a handheld that really will blow us all away. Until that day, though, touching will remain good.*

**FROM:** Denislav Sisoiev

**SUBJECT:** Sci-Fi anti-bashing

Kingpin's bashing of the sci-fi genre in your October issue was a bit ignorant. The sci-fi genre is called so because it is fiction based on scientific facts and ideas. Calling it fantasy is like saying that an orange is actually a lemon. When they wrote for the first time about the HUGE super computers in a sci-fi book, the computers were most probably as big as houses, hence the fiction had to be based on the current facts, scaled just so much that it accommodated for what they thought would be 30 years of PC evolution. The sci-fi genre redefined some of the ideas used in today's technology. Believe me: when they make the first robot, it will have the three laws of robotics.

*There are already robots out there, but they are a bit simplistic to qualify for Asimov's laws yet (it's doubtful that a robotic vacuum cleaner needs to know that it should not hurt any human beings, unless they are really damn small). But didn't Asimov's own robot books explore ways of how the laws could fail? Anyway, sci-fi is hit and miss. Take for instance the various competing ideas in modern sci-fi over warp speed, folding space or hyper-jumps (Chihuahuas know where Sam Neill went in Event Horizon). Each source has a different opinion about it and pretty much none of them are based on much more than wild quantum theory (if at all). Likewise, we only had recent theoretical developments to support teleporters, even though the idea has been around for decades. But there is the other side as well. Jules Verne, predicted the use of a submarine in 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea long before we actually had any. But 100 years ago no one predicted the Internet, let alone mass scale computing. Usually science fiction has to be fantasy first. **NAG***





## GRAW RULES BAFTA AWARDS

**U**BISOFT HAD REASON TO celebrate when its hit shooter *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* nabbed two awards at the annual BAFTA Video Games Awards. BAFTA, or the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, first started awarding games in 2003, and past winners include *Half-Life 2*, the *EyeToy* and *Halo*. This year, *GRAW* took the award for best game and was also awarded for Technical Achievement. It had serious competition in the guise of *Guitar Hero*, *LocoRoco*, *Brain Training* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, but managed to take the top award, though the other titles didn't go home empty-handed. *Locoroco* received two awards, winning for Best Characters and Best Children's Game. Much-overlooked adventure title *Psychonauts* walked away with the Screenplay award, while rhythm game *Guitar Hero* won Best Soundtrack. The new *Tomb Raider* picked up an award for Best Original Score, while *Electroplankton* won the Audio award for its innovative use of sound. *Shadow of the Colossus* was awarded for its Artistic Achievement, and the sequel to last year's surprise hit *LEGO Star Wars* won for Best Gameplay.





## WINNERS

**ACTION & ADVENTURE:** Shadow of the Colossus

**STRATEGY: RISE & FALL:** Civilizations At War

**CASUAL:** Buzz! The Big Quiz

**CHILDREN'S:** LocoRoco

**SIMULATION:** The Movies

**MULTIPLAYER:** Dungeons & Dragons: Stormreach

**SPORTS:** Fight Night: Round 3

**INNOVATION:** Brain Training

**CHARACTER:** LocoRoco

**ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT:** Shadow of the Colossus

**TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT:** Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter

**SCREENPLAY:** Psychonauts

**AUDIO:** Electroplankton

**SOUNDTRACK:** Guitar Hero

**ORIGINAL SCORE:** Tomb Raider Legend

**GAMEPLAY:** LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy

**GAME:** Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter



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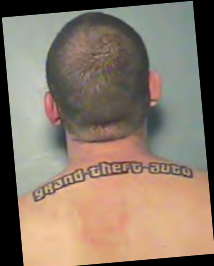
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## SNIPPETS

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A thief wanted for robbery and car theft was arrested recently, thanks to being identified by a certain tattoo. The culprit had the **Grand Theft Auto** logo tattooed across his back.



Who is the better fighter – a character from **Family Guy** or **American Dad?** An official flash site launched by the two shows' creators hopes to answer that very question - [www.americandadvsfamilyguy.com](http://www.americandadvsfamilyguy.com)

If you are in the US, and you manage to buy a pair of Reebok S. Carter Basketball shoes from certain stores, you'd get a code that would unlock rapper **Jay Z** as a playable character in **NBA Live 07**. We're trying to contain our excitement.



If you want to browse the Web on your DS, but you aren't willing to fork out cash for the **Opera DS** browser on a DS cartridge, you'll be happy to hear that a programmer is working on a free browser for the handheld called **Okiwi**. More at [okiwi.blogspot.com](http://okiwi.blogspot.com)



A team of modders is making a new version of the classic N64 game **Goldeneye** in the **Source** engine. Unfortunately, MGM doesn't share their enthusiasm and the released trailer was quickly removed from video hosting services. [www.goldeneyesource.com](http://www.goldeneyesource.com)

## NO RUMBLE IN PS3 CONTROLLER

**T**HE BAD PRESS DOGGING the PlayStation 3 doesn't seem to stop, but no one can say Sony did its best to avoid controversy. The latest problem that emerged around the beleaguered console comes with Sony's announcements around Sixaxis, the wireless controller that will ship with the PS3. Sony unveiled pricing details for buying extra controllers at a very reasonable 5,000 yen (R330.00). A PS2 memory card reader will also be available at 1,500 yen (R99.00) and the official remote to control Blu-ray movies will cost a mere 3,600 yen (R238.00). But the low price for the controller was quickly blighted when SCEA president Kaz Hirai revealed that the Sixaxis will have no rumble features.

"We felt that ultimately the vibration feature, which is a feedback feature, as compared to the motion-sensing, which is an input functionality," he told Kikizo. "When you compare the two, we decided that the input device is a lot more important than feedback, and that has been a strategic decision that we've made." The irony of this rational is obvious when you consider the expensive price tag of the PS3, but Hirai's comments became even more moot when GamesIndustry.biz took up the matter with Immersion, the company that recently won a lawsuit against Sony for using its patented rumble features. Immersion CEO Victor Viegas told the news site that Immersion "... knew how to technically solve their problems" and at no incremental cost. He even cited the G-pad as an example. This third-party PS2 controller has both motion-sensing and vibration as features at only \$5 more than a standard Dual-Shock controller.



The PS3 controller: first it had rumble, now it doesn't.

## GOD OF WAR CREATOR DROPS PSP GAME FOR PS3

**B**EFORE *GOD OF WAR* hit the gaming world, nobody knew or cared who David Jaffe was. Before his *magnum opus* in *God of War*, the only real title Jaffe had under his belt was the lackluster *Twisted Metal*. After *God of War*, Jaffe made some boisterous claims that he was working on a PSP game that would "... bring tears to your eyes." After coming back from his hiatus, Jaffe mentioned that the mysterious Project HL for PSP was now "on the shelf." Commenting on the future of the project, Jaffe added, "f\*\*k it. We'll do HL later... maybe".

Jaffe is now instead focussing his efforts on an unannounced PlayStation 3 project, which according to him, shares elements with *Twisted Metal* and *Bomberman*. The game has been in development for seven months, but is "... on the verge of going Alpha". Jaffe expects the game to hit retail between November and January.



What's up next for David Jaffe?

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NOVEMBER 2006

PlayStation 2 PC DVD



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## PAY SOMEONE ELSE TO PLAY

ON THE XBOX 360, games have the ability to dole out Gamerponts - an arbitrary amount of score that gets added to a total, displayed on your profile as a Gamerscore. Gamerponts are awarded when certain Achievements are met, usually for completing the game or reaching a secret area. Gamerponts have no intrinsic value, other than giving someone boasting rights and a false sense of achievement, but that doesn't stop people from wanting a higher Gamerscore.

Enter [www.levelmy360.com](http://www.levelmy360.com), a service that allows gamers to purchase Gamerponts. In the same way that gold-farming in *World of Warcraft* works, or power-leveling services for MMORPGs, Levelmy360 involves paying the service and then handing over your Xbox Live account details. For \$39.99, you can get 500 Gamerponts while \$299.99 gets you 3,000. Once you've paid and handed over your account details to the Website, they will play various games using it and inform you when they've reached the total Gamerponts you've bought.

Obviously, this setup is risky. Giving someone your account details (Xbox Live stores credit card details in the account) is perhaps not the best move to make. Alternatively, there is no way to tell what games the service will play on your account to boost your Gamerscore, so you might find that they've played a game you had planned to buy and play yourself.

An alternative to paying someone, the Website [www.achieve360points.com](http://www.achieve360points.com) has a detailed list of FAQs for boosting your Gamerscore yourself.

## RAG DOLL KUNG FU TEAM WORKING ON PS3 EXCLUSIVE

MARK HEALEY SPENT THREE years of personal time working on the now cult-classic *Rag Doll Kung Fu*, released via Steam digital distribution. After its release, Healey left his job at Lionhead Studios and formed developer Media Molecule. Now, Media Molecule has inked a deal with SCE to develop an exclusive title for the PlayStation 3.

Neither Sony nor Media Molecule are prepared to speak publicly about the new title just yet, though Healey was quick to boast about the abilities of his small team: "[We] can deliver a world class, triple-A, next-generation product."

Media Molecule has not released a game since Healey released *Rag Doll Kung Fu*, which continues to enjoy success on Steam with its multiplayer kung-fu.



## MICROSOFT LAUNCHES GAMES FOR WINDOWS

SOMEONE FORGOT TO TELL Microsoft that the boxes used in the PC gaming market – DVD case-sized cardboard boxes that fit rather nicely on a shelf. But that hasn't stopped Redmond from defining a more aggressive stance towards promoting PC gaming. At least, that's what they'd like you to think. In reality it appears that Microsoft is more intent on bullying a share of the PC market to its new standards. Considering how lackluster Microsoft's support has been for PC games, apart from the much-hyped incremental releases of new DirectX APIs, Games for Windows seems a bit like pointless window-dressing. But the new standard also conveniently forces PC developers into a few new standards – supporting the 360 controller on the PC, supporting widescreen, supporting Vista and 64-bit and the ability to launch the game from within Media Center. Easy install is also a feature, though most games use Microsoft's installation wizard anyway. The company line is that this will make PC games a lot easier to spot at retail, thus increasing sales. But it's doubtful if the PC market actually needs this kind of help, which appears to be more of a Trojan horse from Microsoft to reign in some control over PC games.

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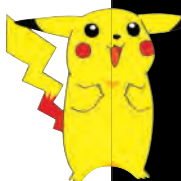
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Opera's DS browser has finally been released in Europe, priced at €39.99. The browser comes in two flavours depending on which DS users own.

At one point Microsoft promised yearly price cuts on the 360. A year has almost passed since the console's release and a price-cut is anticipated soon. But Microsoft, as usual, remains mum on any changes.



Pokemon is still alive and well. Within four days of Pokemon Diamond and Pearl being released in Japan, the game sold over 1.58 million copies. This beats the new release record on the DS set by New Super Mario Bros, which sold 865,000 copies in its first week.

Game exporter Lik-Sang has officially started to take pre-orders for the PS3 and Wii. The good news is that you don't need to put down any cash. The bad news is that because of expected high demand and low volumes, you'll end up paying more than the hardware would retail for normally.



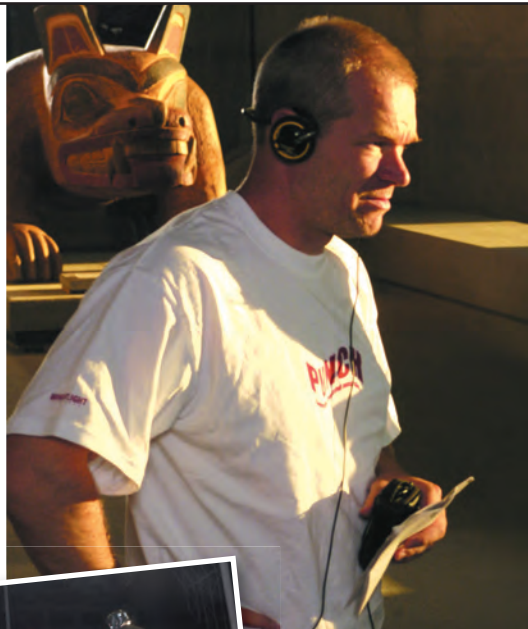
If you end up owning a Wii, but you don't have a wireless network point to connect it to, Nintendo thought ahead and will retail an Ethernet kit separately for wired gamers. Why the Wii doesn't just come with an Ethernet port we won't ask.

## UWE BOLL DOES SOMETHING AWFUL TO CRITICS

YOU CAN HATE HIS movies and spit every time Uwe Boll's name is mentioned, But while gamers' favourite public target, apart from Jack Thompson, might not be a good director, he isn't a bad boxer, as a few of his critics found out. Boll's latest victim was Richard "Lowtax" Kyanka, the man behind SomethingAwful.com and a staunch Boll critic. Earlier this year, Boll challenged several of his critics to boxing matches and it appears that the critics were so confident that they would win that none bothered to train. Training might have been a bit more obvious after Boll clobbered a Spanish journalist earlier this year, but none of the remaining four critics seemed to have gotten the message. The matches, which took place at an outdoor venue in Vancouver in October, were pretty quick. Lowtax barely managed two minutes before throwing in the towel.

"He kept saying it was PR stunt and a joke, but then he came on just killing me," Lowtax moaned. "I want to have more kids someday, so I just said, 'I'm not going to stay in here and keep getting punched in the head.'" The other critics were also suitably pummeled and humbled by the experience.

"See what happens when they take a blow to the head?" Boll exclaimed, "They like my movies." Sadly, Boll isn't planning to quit directing to pursue a boxing career. Gaming site Eurogamer reports the director is planning a sequel to the bombed Bloodrayne, though it's highly unlikely we'll see any of the first movies start returning.



## FREE GAME OF THE MONTH

### THE CLEANER

URL: [darthlupi.com](http://darthlupi.com)  
GENRE: Action  
SIZE: 7MB (on the Cover DVD)

THERE ARE MANY GAMES made with Game Maker, a free and easy-to-use game-creation tool. *The Cleaner*, however, is unlike anything that usually gets released after having been put together in Game Maker. Despite being only 7MB, *The Cleaner* is just as slick, polished and as long as any triple-A title, as long as you remember it was essentially made by a single person. In *The Cleaner* you play someone who has to save the Multiverse, which is pretty standard fare. The game itself is a side-scrolling action title where you run/fly around, shooting bad guys and collecting items/points. Points can be spent to upgrade any of the 10 spells you can use, as well as your various skills such as speed and shield-regeneration. There is an addictive quality to *The Cleaner*, perhaps related to the *Flashback*-like cut-scenes liberally interspersed along the game. The entire experience is stylish and manages to even surprise the player now and then with some creative elements. Your character also has the ability to manipulate objects through telekinesis, allowing you



to fling objects into enemies or even dead enemies into boxes. Each action sequence contains an almost endless amount of variety depending on which spells you choose to use, or how you use your telekinesis.

*The Cleaner* is a rare jewel in the endless desert of free games. It's almost hard to believe its creator didn't opt to charge for it. The only complaint against *The Cleaner* is against its difficulty - often the game is relentless or cunningly hides critical items in plain sight, leaving you flying around aimlessly for a while before finally slapping your forehead in dawning comprehension. That aside, *The Cleaner* is well worth the time and effort.



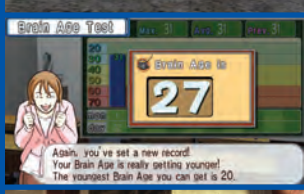
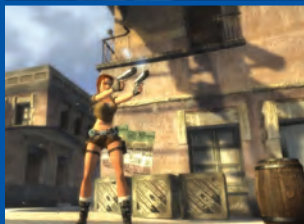


## MOVERS & SHAKERS

**H**IDEO KOJIMA MIGHT BE spending a lot of time with *Metal Gear Solid* and *Boktai*, but his epic Anime saga *Zone of Enders* might return. That is according to an article in the US Edition of PSM, which briefly speaks about a possible **Zone of Enders 3** for the Playstation 3. PS3 fans, in fact, have a few things to look forward to. Bethesda announced that **Oblivion** will be a launch title for the PS3, plus a PSP version is being worked on. Cult horror **Siren** is also rumoured to be heading into a third iteration on the PS3 as well, which is guaranteed to be very creepy. More rumours are fueling speculation that another **Tomb Raider** game is on its way, this time appearing on the PS3 as well. Want more? Well, the strange but interesting antics that is **Warhawk** will be available in 2007. The bad news is that so far there is no PS3 launch title that will be using the controller's tilt technology. Finally, the PS3 is getting its own version of Ninja Gaiden, though this edition is actually a reworking of Xbox game **Ninja Gaiden: Black**. One new feature will be to play as Rachel. Could Team Ninja be working on a new Ninja Gaiden as well?

The PSP caught onto the insane popularity of Dr. Kawashima's brain training. Ubisoft will be releasing **Mind Quiz**, a PSP brain trainer endorsed by the doctor, in Europe soon. **Tenchu** developers K2 plan to add some more RPG goodness to the PSP with **Valhalla Nights**. It's already been in development for two years and is produced by the same guy who brought us **Harvest Moon**, Yoshifumi Hashimoto. Next year, Collectible Card Games (CCG) and *Warhammer* fans can look forward to **Warhammer: Battle for Attila**, a card-based combat game that will feature over 400 cards, themed after the violent universe of the same name. But perhaps the juiciest new game news for the PSP is that **Total Overdose** developer Deadline Games is working on a new PSP game called **Chili Con Carnage**. It's set in Mexico and involves someone taking revenge on a drug cartel for killing his father. So it's really *Total Overdose* on the PSP, but that's not a bad thing. **Rainbow Six** is also heading for the PSP, complete with a functional control system. It will support up to six players in wireless or online play. Finally, with the success of the *GTA Stories* series, speculation is on about a **GTA: San Andreas Stories** for Sony's mobile platform. Rockstar isn't against the idea, but it insists there will be no PS2 port of **Vice City Stories**.

Microsoft officially announced **PGR 4** at X06 while a rumour circulated at TGS (apparently through a flier) that **Metal Slug** is going to be released on Live Arcade soon. EA announced its stab at the *Tony Hawk* games with **SKATE or Die**, a game that involves skating and new 'innovative' controls for the 360 and PS3. Finally, a German publisher has licensed the rights to remake classic Bitmap Bros games **Speedball 2** and **The Chaos Engine**.



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In case any **Rare** fans were panicking over the development of the next **Banjo Kazooie**, the good news is that the original N64 team are at the core of the new game's creation.

**EA** has smelt money and is starting to embrace market content that is sold over the **Xbox Live Marketplace**. The initial packages are stadia and instructional videos for **Madden 07** and **NCAA 07**, with more to follow.



**Microsoft** announced that 1,080p will soon be supported by the 360 through a software upgrade. This goes hand-in-hand with supporting the soon-to-be-released HD DVD drive.

**Peter Moore**, the boss behind the 360, told Cnet he wanted the kind of gamers who would starve a while in order to get an HDTV. Unfortunately, he doesn't seem to realise that in most countries that means starving for at least a year.



Famed developer **BioWare** has started hiring staff to work on a DS title, though it remains quiet about what it intends to develop.

The **PSP** will soon get a **GPS** attachment when the **MAPiis** is released in December in Japan. The GPS unit won't only help you navigate around town, but it also works with some games such as upcoming title *Everybody's Golf Course*.



## GUITAR HERO 2 READY TO ROCK

IT'S BEEN A GOOD year for Harmonix. Their rocking *Guitar Hero* for PlayStation 2 has been racking up awards and sales, and then came MTV Networks with a hefty acquisition of the developer for a respectable \$175 million.

"The acquisition of Harmonix will deepen MTV's connection to its audience via online, mobile and console music gaming, and

expand the relationship with both labels and artists through the creation of games based on classic songs as well as future album releases," said Christina Norman, president of MTV. Due out on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November from Harmonix, *Guitar Hero 2* (PS2 and an Xbox 360 which will be released later) will boast an impressive list of licensed tracks:

- Motley Crue - Shout at the Devil
- Warrant - Cherry Pie
- Stray Cats - Rock This Town
- Danzig - Mother
- Butthole Surfers - Who Was in My Room Last Night
- Allman Brothers - Jessica
- Cheap Trick - Surrender
- Room Last Night
- Jane's Addiction - Stop
- Wolfmother - Woman
- Mathew Sweet - Girlfriend
- Anthrax - Madhouse
- Spinal Tap - Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight
- Rolling Stones - Can't You Hear Me Knockin'
- Living End - Carry Me Home
- Kiss - Strutter
- Guns N' Roses - Sweet Child O' Mine
- Lamb of God - Laid to Rest
- Nirvana - Heart-Shaped Box
- Rage Against the Machine - Killing in the Name Of
- Reverend Horton Heat - Psychobilly Freakout
- Police - Message in a Bottle
- Primus - John the Fisherman
- Rush - YYZ
- Van Halen - You Really Got Me
- Sword - Freya
- Avenged Sevenfold - Beast and the Harlot
- Kansas - Carry on Wayward Son
- Thin Lizzy - Bad Reputation
- Suicidal Tendencies - Institutionalized
- Foo Fighters - Monkey Wrench
- Aerosmith - Last Child
- Dick Dale - Misirlou
- Alice in Chains - Them Bones
- Heart - Crazy on You
- Megadeth - Hangar 18
- Iggy Pop and the Stooges - Search and Destroy
- Stone Temple Pilots - Tripping on a Hole in a Paper Heart
- Lynyrd Skynyrd - Free Bird
- Pretenders - Tattooed Love Boys
- Black Sabbath - War Pigs



## PETER JACKSON TO MAKE VIDEOGAMES

DESPITE RECENT REPORTS ON the Internet, Peter Jackson's new game development studio, Wingnut Interactive, is not actually working on the new RTS set in the *Halo* universe, *Halo Wars*.

Peter Jackson did, however, announce that he will be working on an unnamed title for the Xbox 360 and Xbox Live. Jackson explained that his changing attitude towards film has led him to look at other options, such as games.

"I've got to the stage now where I just end up catching something on DVD and I'm more excited about games coming out in the next 2-3 months than films," he said. "That created an awareness in me of the shift in entertainment options out there, and if I'm feeling that others are too."

When asked about why he chose the Xbox 360, he told attendants at a Microsoft press conference that he saw Xbox 360 and Live as "... an amazing living canvas, which allows the storytellers of our time to express themselves in a new medium."

"From a movie-maker's point of view, it is clear to me that the Xbox 360 platform is the stage where storytellers can work their craft in the same way they do today with movies and books, but taking it further with interactivity," he concluded.





## SAM & MAX HEADING TO WII?

**T**ELTALTE GAMES, THE INDEPENDENT developer known for *Bone* and the latest *Sam & Max* games, started a call to arms amongst *Sam & Max* fans to get the duo onto Nintendo's Wii.

"We'd love to bring *Sam & Max* to the Wii. We already think it's a good fit. In fact, Heather brought up way back in January how great the Wii controller would be for an adventure game," said Emily Morganti from Telltale. "Thing is, us thinking it's a great idea isn't enough. We need the guys at Nintendo to agree. And with a company as big as Nintendo, getting noticed

by the right people can be tricky." The appeal worked and barely three days later Telltale told fans they don't need to badger Nintendo anymore – the company had taken notice and contacted Telltale. While this by no means guarantees *Sam & Max* appearing on the Wii, it's a real possibility. Unfortunately, fans will probably have to wait for the entire first season to be completed before the Wii version would be released. The first episode was released at the end of October, with five more following over the course of the next six months.

## EA FINISHES BUYING DICE

**T**REATING DEVELOPERS LIKE POKEMON, Electronic Arts has managed to catch another one. Stockholm-based development team Digital Illusions CE (DICE) has been acquired by EA after a lengthy courtship that started in 2004. The *Battlefield* developer is now a fully integrated EA studio, tasked with developing further content for the *Battlefield* franchise as well as developing new titles for the PC and next-gen consoles.

"EA is thrilled to officially welcome this team of incredibly talented people and a globally recognised franchises," said Paul Lee, president of EA Worldwide Studios. "We're confident that our creative approach and business leadership principles are well matched to share future success," he added. EA tried to acquire DICE back in 2004, but DICE shareholders were against the publisher's offer, even though it was recommended by Digital Illusions' board of directors. Since then, however, both companies have worked out differences in order to merge.

Hot on the heels of the acquisition, Electronic Arts announced that it has closed



down Digital Illusions Canada, the Ontario-based division of DICE. EA's communications boss Tiffany Steckler confirmed the closure. The staff from the studio are currently being considered for other positions within EA.

"In Canada we have three locations - Burnaby, Vancouver and Montreal - so we didn't need a development studio in Ontario," she revealed. "Many of the staff from that office are now being interviewed for positions at either EA Canada or elsewhere, and the work that was being undertaken at Ontario will now be transferred to Stockholm, back to the Digital Illusions team in Sweden."

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Mobile developer **Digital Chocolate** got awarded as Best Developer at the recent Mobile Entertainment 2006 awards. **Gameloft** won an award for Best Publisher.



The release of **Doom** on **Live Arcade** has fueled speculation that **Duke Nukem 3D** might go the same route. But **3D Realms** said that, while it thought about the idea, it simply doesn't have time to port the game at this point.

**Rockstar** has announced its next next-gen title, a noir thriller called **L.A. Noire**. The development will be done by new Aussie developer **Team Bondi**, a studio established by the guy who made **The Getaway**.



It might be old news, but **Activision** did the obvious after purchasing **Red Octane** and the **Guitar Hero** series. From now on, expect to play air guitar on more than one system.

**Eve Online** developer **CCP** has announced that it intends to keep supporting the MMO, despite increasing competition. "We're extremely dedicated to continue having Eve evolve throughout the years. There are no plans to stop developing Eve, because the concept of space travel is timeless. It doesn't go out of fashion."

**Microsoft** plans to launch a classic line for the 360 soon. The first games that will feature in this budget line will be **Kameo**, **Perfect Dark Zero**, **Condemned** and **King Kong**.



## CRYSIS COULD BE PORTED, SAYS CRYTEK

IT SEEMS THAT DEVELOPER Crytek, the creator of *Far Cry*, can't make up its mind. At the Leipzig convention in Germany, senior game designer Bernd Diemer stressed that their upcoming first-person shooter *Crysis* is too demanding for the next-generation consoles. Diemer was quoted saying, "... next-generation consoles like the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 3 do not offer sufficient power." Recently, however, Crytek's lead artist, Michael Khaimzon, mentioned that the developer could confidently port *Crysis* to the PS3 and Xbox 360.

"I don't think there would be any problem to convert anything we work on to the next-gen consoles if we decided to. We have enough power here, with programmers and artists, to be able to do such a thing. It's just a matter of making the decision."

When asked if the team at Crytek would be interested in working on the next-generation consoles, Khaimzon replied: "I'm pretty sure it would be interesting for us to do stuff on the PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360."

"We would just have to see how much of a sacrifice to the game we'd have to make. Or whether there would be a sacrifice at all, maybe we could find a way to make the game look exactly the same as it does on PC on the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 3."

When questioned about the possibility of *Crysis* appearing on either PS3 or Xbox 360, Khaimzon responded, "There might be, the decision isn't mine to make. I don't know of any official plans to do so, but I know there are rumours and talk, but I couldn't say anything concrete."



## MGS4 ONLY IN LATE 2007

Hideo Kojima has announced that *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* will only ship late in 2007 at the earliest, and will be released on the PlayStation 3 (though the exclusivity of *MGS4* on the PS3 is still debatable). Kojima has mentioned that there is still a year's worth of development left on *MGS4*. A recent trailer shown at the Tokyo Game Show finally shed light on actual gameplay. Kojima explained that in *MGS4* you could go in all-guns-blazing if you want due to the more freeform nature of the game, though stealth will still be an option. The new trailer showed plenty of battle sequences including demonstrations of close quarters combat. The new Octocam (octopus camouflage) system was also shown, which lets Snake hide in plain sight by adapting his sneaking suit to reflect nearby colour schemes.

Nothing has been announced or even hinted at yet, concerning any kind of online offering for *MGS4*, though 'downloadable content' is such a next-gen buzzword it should be expected that *MGS4* will have some form of online connectivity.

## US LAWMAKER PROPOSES GAME DECENCY ACT

RED UPTON, A MICHIGAN congressman, has proposed the 'Video Game Decency Act of 2006'. It aims to "... prohibit deceptive acts and practices in the content rating and labeling of videogames".

This new act comes hot on the heels of the 'Truth in Video Game Rating Act', which was brought forward by the bipartisan group of Congressmen headed by Florida Republican Cliff Stearns. The 'Truth in Video Game Rating Act' aims to force the ESRB rating board to play games in their entirety before assigning a rating, as well as putting publishers in the spotlight if they don't reveal the complete content of a game.

The 'Video Game Decency Act' is designed within the "... guidelines of the Constitution, [and] is a simple, surgical approach to provide new regulatory authority for the Federal Trade Commission to punish bad players in the videogame industry."

Loosely translated, this act would give the Federal Trade Commission the power to pursue financial sanctions against publishers who try to deceive the ratings system. Neither of these proposed Acts, however, would have prevented the 'Hot Coffee' debacle that still hovers around *GTA: San Andreas*. Neither Act would address the 'problem' of user-created modifications that change the age rating of a game, such as *The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion* modifications that add nudity.

"This legislation will restore parents' trust in a system in which game makers had previously done an end-run around the process to deliver violent and pornographic material to our kids," Upton said in a statement. "Parents across the country can breathe a sigh of relief as this legislation goes hand in hand with the mission of the industry's own ratings system."



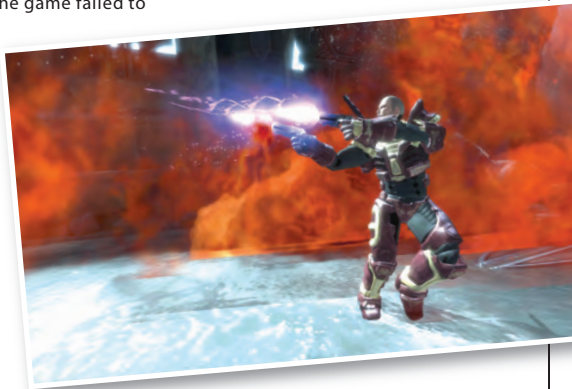


## SILICON KNIGHTS EXPLAIN TOO HUMAN NO-SHOW

**A**FTER A HIGH PROFILE purchase of former-Nintendo stalwart Silicon Knights, Microsoft is yet to see any returns. The studio, best known for *Eternal Darkness* on the GameCube, is currently hard at work on *Too Human*, an ambitious action title that boasts combining melee and weapon combat in ways never seen before. But the game got a lukewarm reception at E3 and didn't make a better impression when it failed to appear at the recent X06 event – a showcase largely dedicated to upcoming 360 games. Microsoft's other major purchase, Rare, was at hand to show off *Viva Pinata* and announced another *Banjo Kazooie* game. So where was *Too Human*?

According to the blog of Silicon Knights president Dennis Dyack, the decision was made right after E3, where the game failed to wow the crowds.

"We made the decision to next show the game when we are ready and we knew that X06 would not be the right time. When we do decide to show the game, our goal is to give everyone a true impression of the game – one that includes story, audio, gameplay, artwork and technology."



## BATTERY FAILURES PROMPT MASSIVE NOTEBOOK RECALL

**A** MAJOR GLOBAL RECALL of certain notebooks is underway after Sony announced problems with some of the batteries manufactured for these specific models. Fujitsu is the latest manufacturer to recall models from its notebook range using the Sony batteries. The recall will affect almost 300,000 of Fujitsu's sold notebooks, including models from its Lifebook series. This follows recall notices from Dell and Apple, which sit at 4.2 million and 1.8 million respectively. The problem comes from loose metal pieces in the battery. Due to how notebook batteries are made, there is always a small amount of loose metal left inside, but in this instance, the threshold was simply too high. Lenovo and Toshiba have also issued recalls, taking the total amount of notebooks affected to over seven million. But Hewlett-Packard, the world's second-largest PC manufacturer, won't be issuing a recall. It reviewed its notebook design and commented that its designs aren't prone to the same problems other manufacturers have encountered.



## KEEP KIDS OFF THE PS2

**D**ON'T CALL US TRAITORS for writing about this – we're just reporting the news. British company Argos ([www.argos.co.uk](http://www.argos.co.uk)) recently unveiled their Game Guardian, a cabinet for the PS2 that is designed for people who are "addicted to videogames" (realistically, it's for over-protective, lazy parents). You place the PS2 inside, set the clock and when the time is up, the PS2 is switched off. What's the bet that parents won't know how to set the clock right, and will ask the kids to do it for them.

# STAR WARS EMPIRE AT WAR FORCES OF CORRUPTION EXPANSION

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## LOST & FOUND

Every month in honour of our favourite TV show *Lost*, we'll hide the Dharma Initiative logo somewhere in the magazine. It could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find it and send an e-mail to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line [Dharma November]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a prize from our friends at HomeTheatrePC.co.za.

## LAST MONTH'S WINNER



Naeema Moosa, p139

## IS THE STARGATE CLOSING?

Although within the series' storyline itself the Gate has almost been shut down by bureaucrats several times. It seems the reality is almost upon us. The highly successful sci-fi show *Stargate SG-1* has been running for around a decade, with a huge and loyal fan-base, but Sci-Fi Channel has announced that it will not be running an eleventh season. While this announcement has been met by an outcry from a host of fans, some concede that the show has run its course, and that it is better that it is laid to rest. Rumour has it that the producers haven't given up on the show, and will be seeking a new broadcast outlet.



## PAY AS YOU PLAY ON THE NEXT GT

**P**REVIOUSLY TITLED *VISION GRAN Turismo*, it has been announced that *Gran Turismo HD* would be the first version released on the PlayStation 3. This version is not *Gran Turismo 5*, but instead a placeholder to keep fans busy (much like *GT Concept* and *GT4: Prologue*).

*Gran Turismo HD* will come in two flavours: Premium and Classic. Both versions (according to reports) will

support multiplayer and will have a total of 770 cars and 51 tracks.

Recent (slightly confusing) reports, however, have made a few things clear: the Premium version will have watered-down multiplayer compared to Classic, while Classic itself will not contain any tracks or cars. To gain either for Classic, players will have to spend real money for each track and car they wish to purchase.

Cars will cost up to a dollar each, with tracks ranging from \$1.70 - \$4.20 approx. Adding all this up, it is suggested that it could cost between \$400 - \$800 to purchase all the content for Classic. The Premium version of the game will come bundled with two tracks and 30 cars - the rest will have to be purchased separately via microtransactions (similar to Xbox Live Marketplace).



## ANTI-WAR PROTESTS IN AMERICA'S ARMY

**A**MERICA'S ARMY (A FREE online game) is both a game and a recruitment tool for the US Army. An art professor from the University of Nevada has decided to use the game as an anti-war protest platform. Instead of playing the game as it was intended, Joseph Delappe runs around without firing a shot. Eventually, he gets killed by a player and as his character dies he broadcasts the name of a real American soldier killed in Iraq, as well as the age of the soldier and date he was killed. Delappe has performed this act 1,273 (and counting) times so far. A few anti-war activists are sympathetic to his cause, but not everyone agrees that online games are an appropriate place for protest. One player compared it to "crashing a Girl Scout meeting by yelling through a megaphone that they should vote his candidate into office".



## NEW 360 CONTROLLERS ON THE WAY?

**P**RODUCER FOR THE POPULAR *Pro Evolution Soccer* series, Shingo Takatsuka, revealed that Microsoft sent his team two new Xbox 360 controllers to test with *Pro Evolution Soccer 6*.

He was sent the controllers so that "the team could test re-mapped button configs for *Pro Evolution Soccer*". The exact details surrounding how the controllers differ from the current 360 controller are unknown. There is a lot of speculation, including that the new controllers may have replaced the sensitive Triggers with a more Dual-Shock set of shoulder buttons (as most *Pro Evolution Soccer* players admit they prefer the PlayStation 2 controller for *Pro Evolution Soccer*, though this may just be legacy habit). Another rumour is that the controller has replaced the right analogue stick with a 'trackball' of sorts, making for more precise control of the characters in *Pro Evolution Soccer*.



## CAPTION OF THE MONTH

**E**VERY MONTH WE'LL CHOOSE a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better [funny] caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject [November Caption].



### NOVEMBER CONTEST

**NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT:**  
"Hey! You're not my cat! What did you do with Fluffy?"



### OCTOBER WINNER

"Show of hands - who says we throw the fat guy to the zombies?"  
- Matthew Fick

**RULES:** (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

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## RESIDENT EVIL 5 REMAINS MULTI-PLATFORM

**R**ECENT SPECULATION HAS RUN rampant, implying that the upcoming *Resident Evil 5* may move to be an Xbox 360 exclusive. The speculation was fueled by comments from Xbox Japan headman Takashi Sensui, who refused to deny the game could be re-branded an Xbox 360 exclusive. Speaking to GamesIndustry.biz, Sensui said, "All I can say is we are very good friends with Keiji Inafune". Creator of the *Mega Man* and *Onimusha* series, as well as *Dead Rising*, Keiji Inafune has been a large part of Capcom's success.

*Resident Evil 5* was not shown at this year's Tokyo Game Show, even though it was announced at a Microsoft next-gen showcase over a year ago.

"*Resident Evil 5* has been announced for Xbox 360 and PS3 and remains on course for release on both platforms", producer Masachika Kawata said in a statement. Capcom representatives were quick to add that it meant the game would be released "at the same time" on both consoles.

## WARHAMMER<sup>®</sup> MARK OF CHAOS<sup>™</sup>



### Warhammer: Mark of Chaos

Over a year has passed since the Great War, during which the brutal Chaos armies swept across the Empire lands. Many fierce battles still rage across the Old World. Portions of the defeated Chaos armies have retreated to the distant Northern Wastes, while others have fallen to hostile groups. Among these tribes, new Champions rise up in an effort to reunite the Chaos forces, yet eventually all fail. None can match the power of their fallen leader, Asavar Kul.

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The creator of **Pac-Man** and **Microsoft** are teaming up to host the **World Pac-Man Championships** early next year. The Top 10 ranked Pac-Man players on Xbox Live Arcade will be flown to New York City to compete for the top honour.

The **360's HD DVD player** will ship out to most of the world in late November and will retail for around R1,200. The unit will come bundled with an HD version of **Peter Jackson's King Kong**.



A very wild rumour is suggesting that the 360 will see the third and final **Ikaruga** game appear on it. But it's all speculation. What is true is that Ikaruga developer **Treasure** is planning to do a new SHMUP for the console.

A small poll by casual-games developer **Popcap** revealed that over 66% of its players are aged over 50.

More details on the upcoming **Clock Tower** movie have emerged. The main character, Alyssa, doesn't listen to her estranged mom and returns home only to discover some ancient evil lurking around. Production on the game movie will start in December.



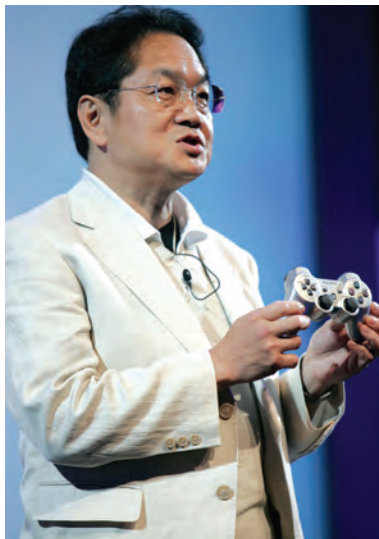
Nintendo president **Satoru Iwata** says that the **Wii** wants to woo the untapped demographics of mothers and old people, but it won't be easy. He told Next-Gen.biz it will be "like trying to sell cosmetics to men."

## EUROPEAN CONSUMERS DON'T MIND PS3 DELAY — SONY

IN RECENT MONTHS IT has become fairly easy to write bad news about Sony, but largely because of Sony. This might appear to be writer's bias, but the company doesn't miss a beat in doing something strange that inevitably catches the world's attention. The latest salvo from Sony executives came from SCE Worldwide Europe VP Jamie MacDonald when he told a prominent game site that European gamers won't mind waiting for the PS3.

"European consumers have shown that historically they don't mind [the delays], because they end up buying as many PlayStations, if not more, than the US and Japan," he told Gamesindustry.biz. Technically he is correct, and the hype around so-called global launches is often just that. Even Microsoft faked a global launch by launching in three major territories. Both the Xbox and PS2 only arrived in Europe months after the Japanese and US Launches – and even the US has had to wait in the past when consoles first launched in Japan. But his quote couldn't carry a worse sentiment, as European gamers certainly do mind waiting. They just never had a choice in the matter.

SCE president Ken Kituragi also stirred some controversy when he told trade mag



MCV that Sony "doesn't care" about its competition, namely the already-launched 360 and the Wii. Fortunately it's not all bad news. Sony Worldwide Studios president Phil Harrison confirmed that both *Resistance* and *Genji* will be launch titles, while Kituragi used his keynote speech at TGS to announce a 10,000 yen price cut for the PS3 in Japan, as well as HDMI support for all Japanese PS3 consoles. Unfortunately Sony still feels that the price tag in other regions is still more than fair.

## PS3 OVERHEATED AT TGS? NO, SAYS SONY

IGNORE THOSE ONLINE PHOTOS of Sony crew placing fans inside the PlayStation 3 display cases at the Tokyo Game Show Sony Europe has categorically denied reports that the PS3 hardware have suffered any problems due to overheating. Macquire Securities analyst David Gibson wrote that the PS3 units at the Tokyo Game Show were overheating, which is assumed to have caused Sony shares to drop by 2.75 percent due to concerns over the stability of the console. Sony however, was adamant that there are no heat problems with the PS3.

"SCE can categorically deny that there's any problems with PS3 units overheating," said the company in a statement issued to GI.biz, "As could be seen on the TGS floor by the tens of thousands of media and public attendees, both the hardware and software worked flawlessly," the statement concludes.

## KEEP YOUR BOSS AND GAMES SEPARATE WITH THE STEALTH SWITCH

EVER HAD THAT PROBLEM that you wanted to play games or do something other than work on your work computer, but you have a pesky boss who actually expects you to work? Rational arguments towards the de-stressing benefits of games often don't work and slipping sleeping tablets into management's Latte machine isn't a long-term solution. Thus, Thinkgeek.com brings the perfect solution. The Stealth Switch plugs into any USB port and with a light tap from your foot can completely hide the main application, all other applications and/or desktop icons. It can also mute sound, hide your taskbar and keep any unwelcome management types away with a password feature.



## WARNER PATENTS BLU-RAY/HD-DVD HYBRID DISC

THE FORMAT WARS BETWEEN Blu-ray and HD DVD are still stirring feathers everywhere, mainly because there is no clarity on which format is likely to win the public's approval. There is even speculation that movie lovers who have embraced DVD aren't going to be persuaded that easily that a new format is worth spending a lot of money on. The companies caught in the middle of the formats, namely the movie studios, thus have a tough and expensive task ahead of them. While some decided to only support one format, others are embracing both, just in case. Warner recently became the first studio to support both Blu-ray and HD DVD when it released *Lake House* on all three disc formats (including DVD). But this is obviously a costly exercise. As such, Warner engineers are working on a new disc format that will support all three formats in one. Both Blu-ray and HD DVD use blue lasers to read data, but Blu-ray reads data at a depth of 0.1 millimetres, while HD DVD does so at 0.6mm. The engineers believe they can put data for both formats on the same side and, by making the Blu-ray layer slightly transparent, HD DVD lasers will be able to read data without interference. The normal red-laser tracks for DVD would be on the other side of the disc. The concept is still expensive, but cheaper than pressing and packaging three separate types of discs.



## CHARTS

### PC GAMES

#	Title
1	The Sims 2
2	LEGO Star Wars 2
3	The Sims: Glamour Stuff
4	Pirates of the Caribbean
5	Prey
6	Quake 4
7	The Sims: Family Fun Stuff
8	Counter Strike: Source
9	El Matador
10	World of Warcraft
11	Need for Speed: Underground 2
12	Prince of Persia 3
13	GTR 2
14	Age of Empires
15	The Sims: University

### PLAYSTATION 2

#	Title
1	WWE Smackdown vs Raw 06
2	Gran Turismo 4 Platinum
3	Buzz the Big Quiz Game
4	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Platinum
5	Juiced Platinum
6	SSX 4
7	Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories
8	Formula 1 2006
9	Need for Speed: Most Wanted
10	Tekken 5 Platinum
11	Battlefield 2: Modern Combat
12	Bond: From Russia with Love
13	God of War Platinum
14	Crash: Twinsanity
15	Moto GP4 Platinum

### PSP

#	Title
1	Need for Speed : Most Wanted
2	FIFA Street 2
3	SSX 4
4	Daxter
5	The Sims 2
6	Need for Speed: Underground Rivals
7	Formula 1 2006
8	Burnout Legends
9	Pink Paradise
10	Tomb Raider: Legend
11	Fight Night Round 3
12	Cars
13	Def Jam 2
14	Bond: From Russia with Love
15	Juiced

## TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

Bad news for PS3 owners who want to get **Tony Hawk's Project 8**. This version of the game won't have any support for online play, mainly because **Neversoft** only got the final dev kits and code libraries very late.

A new 100-page NPD Group report found that the core gaming group is not the much-vaunted 18-34 age group. Instead, there are far more hardcore gamers in the 6-17 demographic.



Want to play **Half-Life 2** in arcades? **Valve** and **Taito** have worked together to release a version of the popular shooter on cabinets, including co-op and other multiplayer modes. Unfortunately you'll have to travel to Japan to find one.

**Shiny**, once famed for games like **Earthworm Jim**, has been sold to **Foundation 9**, the home to other developers such as **The Collective**. F9 has not given an indication what Shiny will work on, except that it will be working with The Collective on this new game. **Earthworm Jim**, though, stays with Atari.

While details on the ground is still thin, a part of Microsoft's **Zune** media series' relationship with **Xbox Live** has surfaced. Zune players will use the same online points system for songs, equaling **iTunes'** US\$99c per song. No word on movie and game downloads, though.



## MAGE KNIGHT APOCALYPSE



### Mage Knight Apocalypse

Players take on the role of one of five guardians, warriors sworn by oath to seek out the heart of evil plaguing the land and stop it no matter what the cost. As the forces of Chaos rise, a creature of unimaginable strength and destructive power is born to lead the enemy: the Apocalypse Dragon, a seemingly unstoppable five headed monstrosity. In order to face this threat players cannot go it alone, they must rally support from all of the factions of the land and recruit brave heroes to fight for their cause.

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6

**RELEASE:** Need for Speed: Carbon Collector's Edition (PS2, 360)  
**RELEASE:** Need for Speed: Carbon (PSP)

**NAG FUN FACT:**  
 You can do anything you set your mind to, man.

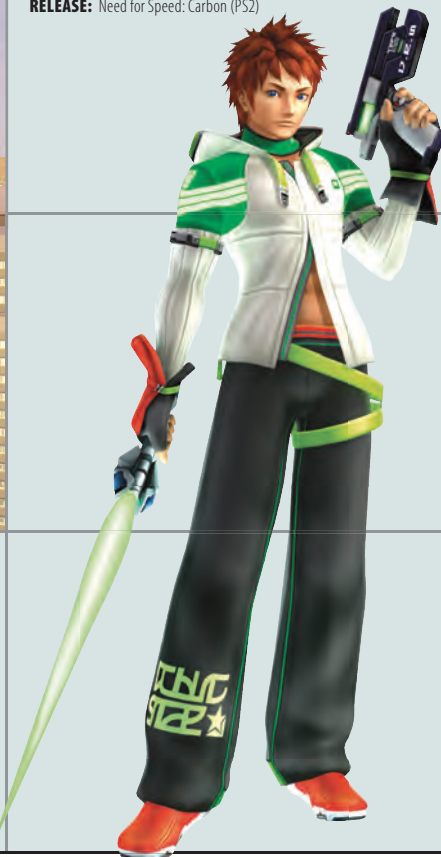
1

**RELEASE:** The Sims 2 Holiday Edition (PC) (Release date TBA)



14

**RELEASE:** Superman Returns (360) ◀  
**RELEASE:** Need for Speed: Carbon (PS2)



15

**RELEASE:** Medieval II: Total War (PC)

22

**RELEASE:** Phantasy Star Universe (360) ◀  
**RELEASE:** Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas (360, PC, PSP) ▼



27

**RELEASE:** Metal Gear Solid Anthology (PSP)



Only  
**R259.16**



Only  
**R173.66**



Only  
**R252.86**



Only  
**R252.86**





3

**RELEASE:** Medal of Honor: Heroes (PSP)  
Now only R346.46

**RELEASE:** Marvel Ultimate Alliance (360, PC, PS2) ◀

**RELEASE:** Gun: Showdown (PSP)

**RELEASE:** Myst Ultimate Compilation (PC)

**RELEASE:** Call of Juarez (PC)

**RELEASE:** Dawn of War: Dark Crusade Expansion Pack (PC)

9

**RELEASE:** Destroy All Humans 2 (PS2)

**RELEASE:** Jaws Unleashed (PS2)

10

**RELEASE:** Cricket 2007 (PS2)

**RELEASE:** Marvel Ultimate Alliance (PSP)

**RELEASE:** Guitar Hero Bundle (PS2)

**RELEASE:** Delta Force Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre (PS2)

**RELEASE:** Warhammer: Mark of Chaos (PC) ▶

16

**RELEASE:** Mortal Kombat Armageddon (PS2)  
Pre-order from kalahari.net for only R369.95

**RELEASE:** Canis Canem Edit (PS2)

**RELEASE:** Sid Meier's Railroads (PC)

17

**RELEASE:** Gears of War (360) ▶

**RELEASE:** The Sims 2: Pets (PSP)

23

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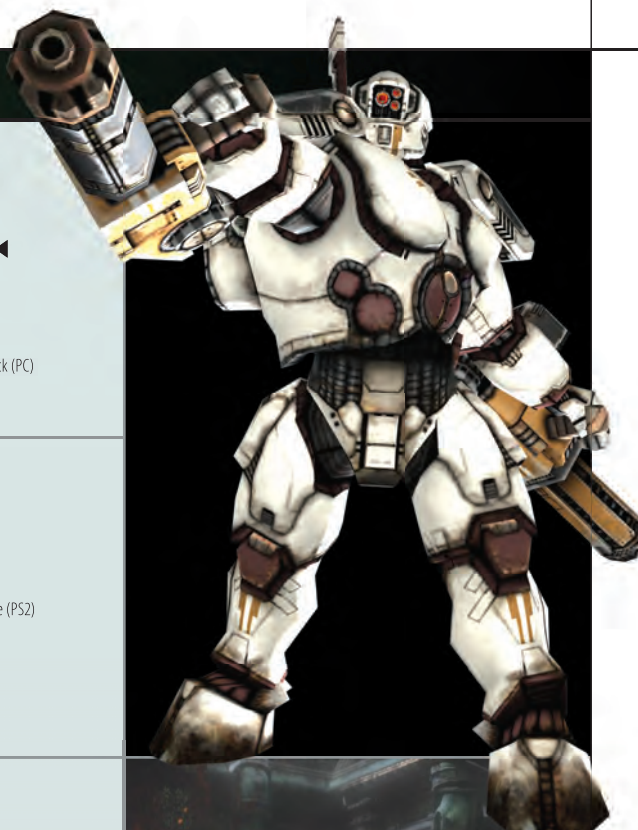
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MIKTAR'S MEANDERINGS

# LANGUISH OUT LOUD

By Miktar Dracon

**G**AMERS HAVE A MOSTLY unique penchant for putting on their own music while playing their favourite game, especially during multiplayer. Except if you're one of those *professional* gamers who needs ab-so-lute *ninja* silence for that extra edge. But we don't care about those people, or at least, I don't. So, if you're the type who enjoys music with your game, here is a suggestion for reading this column. If you can find it, put on **The Killers - Mr Brightside (thin white duke remix)**. I feel that by doing so, you'll find it easier to get into the mindset this column requires. If you can't find the song, just hum along with the rest of us.

So, with that out of the way, every month I sit down at this desk all professional-like and try to think of something to write while resisting the urge to pick my nose. You'd think that with gaming being the penultimate in goddamn everything (according to gamers), it wouldn't be that hard would it? Trawling the news unfortunately leaves you with little inspiration - some idiot shot some people in Quebec and the media are blaming videogames, the

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Micheal James - Editor (*a re-enactment*)

PlayStation 3 is still gearing up to be a phenomenal failure, the 360 is still making Microsoft smile and pat themselves on the back and the Wii continues to excite and entice everyone except manly men. The usual assortment of releases, delays and consternations march along the blogs, standard fare and nothing to write home about.

Locally things are equally sterile. By now the 360 has launched and is either a major hit or it's careening along tepid, the local gamers are bitching about something, Telkom is still often followed in conversation by the word 'sucks' and so on. Riveting stuff.

But don't get me wrong, gaming is still an exciting and vibrant industry with colourful attendants, matched only in scope by their ability to have opinions about everything. Being someone who earns his keep with opinions, don't think I'm being snide. Rather, it's a tip of the proverbial hat towards all those brave boys and sometimes girls who fight the good fight, making sure people know exactly how bad the new *Final Fantasy* game will be. The lack of interesting or pertinent news is no reason to fret however, these things run in cycles after all. There is always something just around the corner, something that will fire up the imagination and remind us all why we do this whole 'gaming' thing.

But until then, the clock ticks over and gamers stand poised. The real question however, is how long can anyone keep it up? Have you personally given some processing time to contemplate if you'll still be doing the gaming thing, ten, twenty years from now? And if you're still going to be gaming, do you think that there will be games of the type you'll enjoy? Don't for one second think you can keep playing twitch-heavy FPS titles when you're 50, but if not, then what? Do you cringe away from puzzle titles such as *Bejewelled*, but secretly deep down you know that's what'll occupy your time when you clock the big 6-oh?

It's morbid perhaps, but there is some hope - all those developers who grew up with you, developing those titles you loved, as long as they keep developing, theoretically they'll keep developing games for your age group. What that means however, only time will tell. That is, however, if those developers stay in the industry. Can you imagine a world, where you're 40 and everyone making games is 20? How does that bode for the ageing gamers, trying to get one last fix from their life-long hobby?

How about this, you tell me what you think the future of gaming holds for the gamers of today. Avoid PC vs. Console debates, this isn't about who has the bigger processor. Rather, what type of games do you think you'll be playing when you're 40, and what do you think the industry will look like when you turn that age? Email your comments to [miktar@nag.co.za](mailto:miktar@nag.co.za), I'd be curious to hear them. **NAG**



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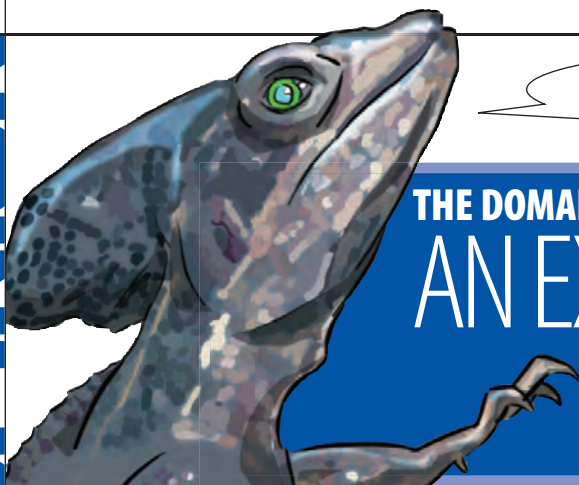
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Beware the highland cattle

# THE DOMAIN OF THE BASILISK AN EXERCISE IN INTERACTIVE LITERARY THEORY

By Anton Lines

THE ENTIRE GENRE of the computer role-playing game, popularised by iconic titles such as *Baldur's Gate*, *Diablo* and *Final Fantasy*, owes its existence to the original pen-and-paper RPGs of the mid-twentieth century. Building on the fundamentals of Tolkien-esque fantasy, these classics created a system that has become synonymous with the genre itself. Where elves and magic are associated with fantasy, experience points, levelling up and character classes are associated with role-playing. There's no universal maxim that states role-playing needs these things – several of the more recent games feature no dice throwing at all, for example – but the conventions have become so commonplace that we accept them as natural.

Conventions are usually in place for a reason. The ones I've just mentioned (and there are many, many more) have resulted in a host of groundbreaking, fantastically successful computer games. Conventions can certainly be restricting, but in this case we could hardly have asked for a better set to define the genre. In fact, they're so well designed they can be used as theoretical models for many aspects of real human experience. Now, this is the kind of thing you'll hear people discuss in relation to poetry, novels and films, but not, for the most part, interactive entertainment. As such, I'm going to take a closer look at the possibility of using role-playing games as metaphors for life.

A role-playing game is, by its very nature, what literary theorists refer to as a *bildungsroman*. As the label suggests, these kinds of narratives trace the growth (*bildung*) of their central characters, with emphasis on the formative periods of life. Hollywood has adapted this formula, of course, in what is popularly known as the "zero to hero" film. Role playing games also tend to fall on the popular side, as the central characters are almost exclusively heroes. Nevertheless, they are concerned with growth and development.

There are two related metaphors used to represent learning. The first is the concept of levels. Levels are an attempt to represent the way in which humans (and, by extension, other imaginary species) learn skills. Whether or not the original designers sat down with psychology textbooks I don't know, but this is just about the most accurate model I've come across. Human beings don't learn in a neat, gradual progression; we learn in fits and starts, going through periods of apparent stagnation before making one single stride when the neural connections in our brain 'click' into place. Many people recognise this when learning to drive. They struggle for weeks, then wake up one morning and suddenly 'get it'. We learn in a series of eureka moments.

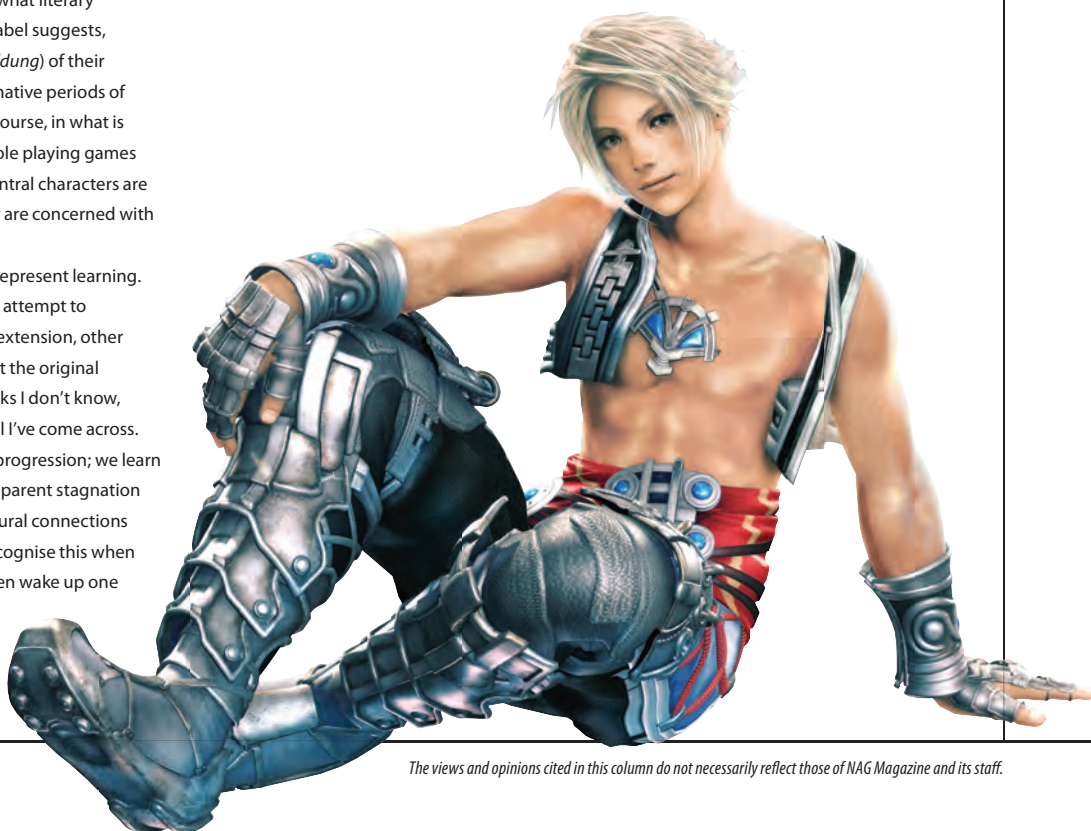
Levels sum up this process perfectly. The characters repeatedly perform

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certain skills (usually combat skills) as a form of training, gaining experience points for each achievement (i.e., killing a monster). However, the growth only comes once a certain amount of points have been stored, at which point the character levels up and improves his abilities or learns a new skill.

The second metaphor is the idea of a character's base attributes. When creating your hero, you decide, in a sort of parody of genetics, what he or she will naturally be good at. While there are sometimes restrictions on skills depending on character class, most games will allow any character to learn any skill, but those with the natural inclination will learn them faster. A current theory in psychology sees the differences between people's abilities in precisely this way. Anyone can learn to do anything, but those raised in a certain way or having inherited the trait from their parents will need to put in less effort. Basically, all humans have the same upper limits (give or take a little), but some may get there in ten years while it'll take others a lifetime.

There's so much to discuss on this topic I'm afraid I've fallen drastically short of doing it justice. The possibilities for looking at games in a literary light are simply endless, and I truly believe that in the next ten to twenty years we'll start seeing them being taken seriously by schools and universities. **NAG**



The views and opinions cited in this column do not necessarily reflect those of NAG Magazine and its staff.



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DAMMIT

# SPRING HAS SPRUNG

By Megan Hughes

**F**INALLY! JUST WHEN YOU'D finally given up hope of ever seeing spring again, suddenly it jumps up out of nowhere and hits you in the face. There you were, all snugly warm and cosy in your jackets and coats, when you all of a sudden felt the urge to remove a layer or two because, gasp, you were too hot! Now the anticipation mounts as we all wait for summer to do the same, bringing with it beach parties and lazy afternoons around the pool after a braai with some mates.

But wait! You can't just spring into summer the way you can leap into spring. You have to be prepared. Spring is the lag-time before summer that gives you the chance to check your weapons and calculate your defence strategy. What am I talking about? Spring cleaning, of course!

Now is the time to get off your butt (unless you're studying for matric finals; in which case stay where you are and good luck!) and get some cleanliness going. If this is the first time anyone has suggested the idea of spring cleaning to you, you may be a little nervous and unsure of where to start. Don't panic, Dr. Dammit is here to help. I would never just drop you in at the deep end without first teaching you how to swim (unless you've really annoyed me in some way).

First, let's start with your computer (if you can find it amongst the wires, takeaway boxes and printed, but useless, pages, that is). If you can't find your computer, and you know for sure that it is still on your premises, maybe you should start by cleaning your desk. This can be done by throwing out anything that's not important. This, however, does not include school textbooks and files if you're still attending school. If you're afraid to dive in there alone, call your mom for backup. If, however, you are anywhere near the age of 30 and your mom can be called without using a phone, you may just want to consider a spring cleaning of your entire life.

Anyway, back to your computer. The basic aim of any spring clean is to get rid of clutter and free up space. This is exactly the point of a spring clean of the computer, specifically: freeing up space in the memory. For starters you may want to run a defrag while you finish

**IF THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE HAS SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF SPRING CLEANING TO YOU, YOU MAY BE A LITTLE NERVOUS AND UNSURE OF WHERE TO START**

reading this copy of *NAG*, as well as any anti-spyware program you may have. Then it's time to tackle the hard stuff (and if that, in your life, refers to porn, then you've got a lot more to get through than the rest of us).

The easiest way to spring clean your computer is to open your control panel and select the 'Add and Remove Programs' icon. This will open a list showing all of the programs installed on your computer. Go through the list and find the programs you haven't used during the winter and uninstall it (as long as it's safe to do so. I take no responsibility for any harm inflicted on any computer by anyone following or not following this advice.)

Next, you may want to clear the temporary Internet files and Internet history. If you don't know how to do this, however sad a person that might make you, just right click on your Internet Explorer icon on the desktop, then click Properties. In the window that opens, click the 'Delete Files' button. Again, I take no responsibility, etc, etc, etc.

Once you've completed that task, and found your computer still operational, it's time to look through your files and folders. Yes, you're actually going to open that folder you have aptly named 'Stuff' and take a look inside. What you find may or may not disturb you, but it must be done nonetheless. Take a nice long look at all your 'stuff' and delete all the things you really don't need or use anymore.

If you have a CD or DVD writer, you may want to make use of this function to save space on your hard drive (which works out a lot cheaper than buying another hard drive every time you run out). Of course, you could always just transfer any music you have to your iPod, if you're lucky enough to have one (any donations of this nature will gladly be accepted).

Congratulations, you've just completed your first PC Spring Clean. Don't you feel so much lighter now? Good. Now that that's done, you could always open a window, allowing that fresh rain soaked air to flow in along with the sounds of birds freshly migrated from some other horrid place. Ah, isn't spring a lovely time of year. **NAG**





# PG191

## Indeed a Monitor Made for Gamers

Packs 2ms Response Time,  
Powerful Bass Performance and  
Video Communications into 1 Display



Aluminum-alloy base

*I recently had the pleasure to play around with the new ASUS PG191 LCD monitor, which the company is marketing as a display tailored for the gaming community. I spent some time with it, and found several reasons why I think the PG191 is as good as advertised.*

### Jazz up your gaming system

Many avid players like to personalize their computers with light effects and stickers that match the games they are playing, and hence, the PG191 included themes of different game types into its designs.

- Aluminum alloy neck that looks like a robotic arm. It has a Star Wars feel to it.
- Diamond-cut aluminum alloy base
- Monitor contour and glazed panel frame are based on designs of stealth bomber
- Subwoofer box at back takes on the shape of a tank canon
- The stylish cover of subwoofer box looks like the alloy wheel of a race car.

### Heart-thumpin' bass

Sound plays a big part in the whole gaming experience as well. The PG191 incorporated 2.1-channel audio, 10W satellite stereo speakers and the 15W ASUS Power Bass System, offering high-quality audio comparable to the best LCD TVs.

The monitor further adopted SRS TruSurround XT™ Technology to support Dolby™ and the latest game titles 5.1-and 6.1-channel sound standard. No more tangling cables and extra cost for additional speakers to blast music and game sound effects.



Subwoofer box, 3 USB2.0 ports, microphone and earphone jacks, and SRS hotkey built-in

### Hotkeys Quickly Activate Special Modes

The PG191 offers hotkeys to activate its special audio and video modes. Select the right modes to optimize your listening and visual experiences.

- Hotkey for 5 Sound Preset Mode Selections (Fighting Game, Strategic Game, Theater, Music, Standard)
- Hotkey for 5 Video Preset Mode Selections (Game, Night View, Theater, Scenery and Standard)
- Hotkey for activating and deactivating SRS TruSurround XT

### Smooth and sharp images

TraceFree, an exclusive technology found only on ASUS monitors, accelerates gray-to-gray response time to 2ms. By getting rid of ghostings and tracers during games and movies, the PG191 provides smoother and clearer images. Another ASUS-developed feature is Splendid™ Video Intelligence Technology. It intelligently detects activation of graphics applications and dynamically fine tunes image color, brightness, sharpness and contrast for visual conditions most comfortable to the human eye. Splendid™ further offers five special modes (Standard, Game, Theater, Scenery and Night) that can be activated by a hotkey for different video usages.

### Interactive gaming right out of the box

With the 1.3M-pixel built-in webcam and headphone and microphone jacks, the PG191 is a video conference center right out of the box. For online games that require teamwork and team strategies, the ASUS monitor is an ideal solution. The whole team no longer needs to get together at an Internet cafe to play games such as Counter Strike and Battle Field. Just turn on the webcam and plug in the headset and microphone, and you're ready to see and chat with teammates while gaming at the comfort of your home.

With great video and audio quality, interactive gaming capability built in and cool designs to give your system a new twist, the PG191 is indeed made for gamers.





# KINGPIN WARM AND FUZZY

By Michael James

**F**ROM A MANAGEMENT AND organisational perspective, rAge is a bitch. It's all about endless meetings, phone calls, e-mails, site visits, and ego stroking. The initial discussions usually begin in March each year, with bi-monthly four-hour long meetings culminating in weekly six-hour meetings just before the show. Now, if you include five magazine deadlines every month in amongst all this, it is easy to see how the enthusiasm can wane, temperament can go from good humour to looks of death, and patience can trickle away. So why do it then?

## THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: MOMENTS.

Each year during the show, there are certain moments that stand out, make you smile and justify all the effort. First up was Saturday morning around 09:50 (just before the doors opened). The queue this year stretched right around the parking lot. Hundreds of eager gamers all got up early to come to rAge so they could be there first. I can identify with this level of excitement. Back in the day when the Computer Faire was held at NASREC, a good friend and I woke up early each day of the faire and walked for ages to the venue, just so we could be there the whole day, every day. A queue that starts Friday morning at 08:00 and doesn't let up for almost two hours after the doors open... it's this kind of passion and enthusiasm from the gamers that make rAge so worthwhile. Another moment was Friday night... the Xbox 360 launch. The launch was all fine and well and the hosts kept the speeches short and sweet, but the best part of the launch was coming up the stairs and seeing the glow of over a thousand monitors in the darkness of the NAG LAN. They stretched from one side of the upstairs area to the other and down below. It was a breathtaking sight. However, perhaps

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the best part of the show was a seven-year-old boy winning an Xbox 360 on the stage. He just couldn't believe his luck, and left the stage clutching his prize to his chest sporting a huge grin. These, among a few others, were the most memorable things at this year's event, and although they may seem small and insignificant, they really made all the effort and hard work worthwhile. We do this rAge thing for all those people out there who get up early in the morning and spend the whole weekend at rAge, experiencing the best gaming has to offer in South Africa in one place during one crazy weekend.

## THE REST

Other good things that happened this year included the launch of the Xbox 360, a significant step forward for gaming in South Africa, no matter what anyone says. We had a number of international competitors at rAge 2006, many of whom came under their own (or sponsored) steam, marking the beginnings of an international event in South Africa that'll see professional gamers from around the world visiting South Africa each year. The NAG LAN was a remarkable success, including the various competitions that everyone ran there. We also had a major increase in attendance this year, which is excellent news for next year as many major companies are starting to take notice of the hordes of people attending the show, which will mean an improved event each year. The list is endless, and I'm sure you're tired of hearing about rAge by now. The last thing I must say is a big thank you to everyone involved this year. From every single person who attended, to all the exhibitors, to the excellent management team that put everything together, without you there would be no rAge - so thanks. **NAG**







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# Burnout 5

## THE NEW SCHOOL OF CRASH

HOTSHOT DEVELOPER CRITERION IS GEARING UP FOR A WHOLE NEW *BURNOUT* EXPERIENCE – ONE NOT LIMITED BY THE RESTRICTIONS OF CURRENT-GEN HARDWARE. GET READY FOR A GAME WHERE YOUR OWN CAR IS MORE THAN SIX TIMES AS DESTRUCTIBLE THAN IN ANY PREVIOUS *BURNOUT* GAME. TALKING THROUGH A SYNDICATED INTERVIEW FROM EA, THE DEVELOPER DIVES INTO THE FEATURE OF THE PLAYSTATION 3 VERSION.

**Developer:** Criterion **Publisher:** EA **Distributor:** EA Africa **Genre:** Racing **Platforms:** PS3, 360 **Release:** TBA

**“W**E JUST CONSIDER OURSELVES to be PlayStation specialists. From our point of view, if you couldn't make a great game on the PlayStation 2, then you will probably struggle to make a great game on the PlayStation 3,” said Alex Ward, creative director at Criterion. It's hard to argue with that statement, especially when you consider the studio it came from. Barely a few years ago, Criterion was better known for its middle-ware package Renderware and the moderately popular *Burnout* games. Today, the studio is an industry superstar, catapulted into the limelight by the incredible *Burnout 3*. Renderware is no more, except for internal EA use, but Criterion's games division has kept the *Burnout* series alive and bolstered its reputation even further with the mind-blowing *Black*.

If one thing comes to mind about Criterion's games, it's how good they look. The *Burnout* titles looked awesome, as did *Black*, to the point where it was hard to believe the PS2 was doing all the grunt work. So there's little dispute over the opinion that Criterion knows its PS2 hardware back-to-front and you can bet your last dollar that it was one of the first studios to get a PS3 dev kit. The cat is already out of the bag as far as the next *Burnout* goes. Criterion is planning a new *Burnout* in a free-form world, making use of next generation hardware as much as

possible. EA syndicated a set of quotes from the team about *Burnout 5*'s PS3 version. What the team had to say will be music to any *Burnout* fan's ears.

It's no secret that *Burnout* has been a performance pusher on the PS2, taking the graphics and physics of the game to the edge of the hardware's capabilities. This is most true for *Burnout: Revenge*, but despite the incredible visuals, style and response of the game, it was really a bare bones game according to Criterion. *Burnout 5* is being built from the ground up to create a whole new experience, but also to take advantage of next-gen hardware as the current generation could never allow for. “*Burnout 5* is designed to take advantage of the hardware. Rather than upgrade a previous version, we've taken the bold step to build from the ground up for PS3; and we can go so much further by starting from scratch,” said Hamish Young, *Burnout 5*'s producer. The team mentioned several drawbacks to the PS2 hardware, such as slow data streaming from the disc and the serious limitation on damage and physics models. In order to simulate the incredible speeds felt in *Burnout*, physics had to be limited as well as the number of parts in the car. On the PS3, Criterion is taking advantage of the seven processors (or Synergistic Processing Units, SPUs, according to Sony). This allows Criterion to give more focus to





Please note that none of the images used in this article are actual screenshots from Burnout 5





specific areas neglected in their past games.

Senior producer Matt Webster explained: "For instance, we wanted real car deformation from day one. The seven SPUs on PS3 gives us the capability to do this for the first time. In previous iterations, we maxed out on 12 chassis parts. That's twelve unique parts that can fly off the car during a crashing sequence. For PS3, we are already looking at around 80 individual parts." That alone is an impressive number, but the team plans on taking the power even further, adding extra damage models and physical interaction with the game's world.

The world is one aspect from *Burnout* that is taking a completely different approach compared to past titles in the series. In other *Burnout* games fans had to navigate menu selections that often interrupted the music and took a while to load. In fact, if *Burnout* is notorious for anything, it's long load times. In the fifth game, the series takes a leaf from other recent racers and introduces a free-roaming sandbox world to explore. The game world is called Paradise City, a place full of burners and other racers eager to earn a reputation. From the start the entire city will be open to players, while challenges and rivals are unlocked as progress is made. This progress is recorded in the player's license as traffic offenses. Some challenges can be attempted anywhere – for example, boosting over a certain distance will add a speeding award. Crashes, speeding and reckless driving are all awarded and bring players closer to new rivals they can challenge.

"Open World isn't the *raison d'être*; it's just a means to an end," said Young, "a catalyst for other things. Our mantra is this: something goes in the game only if it genuinely gives us something new and improves the experience." That remains to be seen, but the challenges are spread more logically. Ten different offenses are attached to each car, so once players get a new car (cars will be attained in multiple ways, including taking rivals' cars from them) they have a new set of challenges to complete and improve their progress in the game. There will also be over 200 offenses scattered across the game world. But the open format of the map give the team and players more room for creativity.







A good example is the new approach to the popular Crash mode. Crashes can now be set up anywhere and at any angle. Criterion is still vague on how this will come together, especially in terms of point scoring, but they insist it's a whole new approach to wrecking large amounts of traffic.

This brings us to arguably the most important aspect to the *Burnout* games – the incredible crashes. Normal physics are boring according to the team at Criterion, so going over-the-top is the central design philosophy. But at the same time the game has to feel as realistic as possible. Causing cartoonish or stylised cars to explode and tear into dozens of pieces is hardly as exciting as taking apart a real-looking vehicle. Criterion wants to evoke an emotional sense from the art style, while at the same time delivering adrenaline-pumping action in the crashes. "We're going to destroy all the cars," Young claimed, "Don't get us wrong, we love shiny cars. This is *Burnout*, a f\*\*\*ed up car is a beautiful thing!"

This includes the new point-of-view where players can sit inside a car while it goes through a crash. That means that the interior of the car will be deformed and destroyed during a crash, giving the game a much more intense feel, not to mention giving fans something they've wanted for years.

But the calling card of the next generation is online and multiplayer. Criterion has managed to gain some experience and insight into the field with the 360 version of *Burnout: Revenge*. The popularity of playing online against other human opponents is undeniable, but at the same time it also creates a ladder system that means to be the best, you have to work long and hard to get there. This, according to Criterion, can't be the only way to approach online matches. So instead, *Burnout 5* will pay a lot of attention to individual player stats, which in turn will help select suitable opponents. Like *Test*



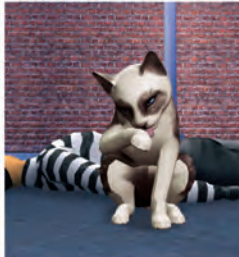
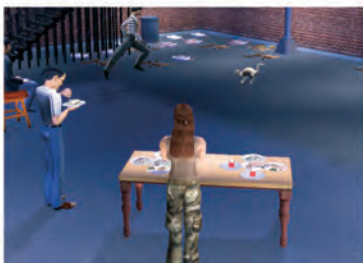


THE SIMS  
Played by

JP Watt



Mr Fluffy Mittens used to be just an ordinary cat who loved curling up in bed with his owner, little Lizzy Lenard. Until one day Lizzy got a call from a famous talent scout who wanted to put Lizzy's kitty in the movies. A deal was made and Mr Fluffy Mittens got a starring role in the biggest blockbuster action movie of the summer, making him the richest and most sought after feline in all of Hollywood. But even though he had personal assistants and crushed velvet couches to sleep on, Mr Fluffy Mittens still thought about Lizzy and how much he loved to be with her.

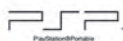


Custom content created by JP Watt 8080



PC CD-ROM

PlayStation.2



www.ea.co.za

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*Drive Unlimited*, the next *Burnout* wants to make the on- and off-line experience as transparent as possible. Offline players will face off against 34 AI opponents who range in their aggression. Likewise, a player's reputation with a specific burner will also dictate the AI's aggression, support or mistakes. Beat an AI opponent once, especially through aggressive tactics, and it will come after you with a vengeance. But beating it a few times will leave the AI discouraged and afraid, often bringing players that small step closer to taking a rival's car.

Online the competition will be even fiercer, especially with the new 'Marked Man' mode. Here a player can mark an opponent in a race and get a bonus if they manage to take the marked car out. It's an extension of the rivals in the series, except with a multiplayer focus. It's not a one-sided treatment, though. If a marked player is taken out, they get awarded a Payback bonus. This, when implemented in a race, can mess with the rival's car by messing with the steering or locking the car's boost for the entire race. A new camera system will let spectators get closer to a race's action than ever before, while online rivalries can be kept alive with special photos – every time a player takes out someone online, a photo is taken for prosperity (and to allow the wrecked driver to get some revenge).

By the sounds of it, *Burnout* has been kept back because of the PS2's limited hardware. But the series already looked stunning on the world's most successful console, so if Criterion says it has big plans for the next-gen iteration on the PS3, it means a lot. Just the mere fact that the player cars in *Burnout 5* will use more sound channels each than current-gen *Revenge* did in total shows how much the ante is being raised for the next game. **NAG**



# SCARFACE™

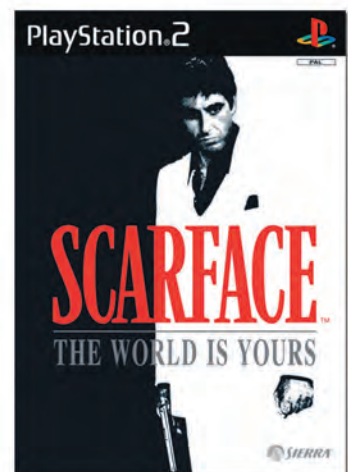
THE WORLD IS YOURS



PlayStation 2



COMING SOON



RADICAL  
ENTERTAINMENT





# PREVIEWS

## THE STUFF OF DREAMS

**G**AMERS ARE PRAGMATICALLY PRACTICAL, for the most part. Gadget and gizmo orientated, it's only natural for gamers to want more things to fiddle with, to want more useful appliances like a coffeecup that uses a USB port to keep your broth warm. But who could resist arbitrary devices such as working perspex light sabres, caffeinated soap or little rearview mirrors you can stick to your monitor? Not content to simply consume, we here at NAG put our grey matter to the task to think up some devices we personally would like to buy, things that would enrich our lives - if they existed. So sit back and enjoy this month's What We Want, as we take you through the most incredible items never made.



**DEVELOPER:** Ensemble **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft **PLATFORM:** 360 **GENRE:** Strategy **RELEASE DATE:** TBA

**W**HERE THERE'S SMOKE, you can usually find fire. This was pretty much the case when Microsoft sent its lawyers to stop the fan project *Halogen*, a mod that used *Halo* assets, but assumed it would not get into trouble since Bungie isn't working on an RTS of its own. The reason behind this sudden act of cease-and-desist was announced at X06 - a *Halo* RTS called *Halo Wars*. It's being developed by resident Microsoft RTS buffs Ensemble Studios, though for the 360 and not the PC. This leaves open a lot of speculation on what we can expect. More so, can Ensemble develop a proper RTS for a console? Alas, it doesn't look like any of the *Halogen* guys were hired.



## GTA: VICE CITY STORIES

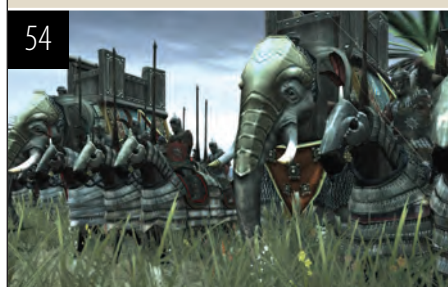
**DEVELOPER:** Rockstar Leeds  
**PUBLISHER:** 2K Games  
**PLATFORM:** PSP  
**GENRE:** Freeform  
**RELEASE DATE:** November 2006

**B**Y THE TIME YOU read this, *Vice City Stories* will have been released on the PSP in Europe. Rockstar Leeds was able to take some pointers from the hits and misses of *Liberty City Stories*, not to mention a big load of encouragement after the game's great success (then again, *GTA* titles always sell well). The team has remained quiet about the improvements in this next title, based in the more Miami Vice-like location of Vice City, but there have been promises of fixing the shortcomings in the original. If successful, we can probably expect a PS2 version as well, but for now, the real deal will lie in whether Rockstar can get even more *GTA* crammed into the PSP.

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## WHAT WE WANT...



### USB-POWERED FOOT-MASSAGER

After a long hard day of sitting at the office, nothing would beat coming home to a computer that not only loves you, it also rubs your tender feet. A USB-powered foot-massage unit, hiding away under your desk, could even be used at work without anyone knowing better. Some PC-software that interfaces with the unit could perhaps upload new massage patterns or adjust the strength. Lovers could use it to tickle each others feet, over the vast expanse of Internet between them.



### "DON'T FORGET" ALARM

This unobtrusive device would use a cellphone SIM-card and could be attached to any door, like an alarm. When the door opens, it will play back various messages you've called into it. A quick call to the unit when you suddenly remember something you have to do later, and you leave yourself an audio reminder that plays when you open the door to your house where the alarm lives. Never forget to buy dog food again, or more importantly, never miss clan meetings or match-ups - the "Don't Forget" alarm comes to your rescue!





## GUNPEY

**DEVELOPER:** Q Entertainment  
**PUBLISHER:** Namco/Bandai  
**PLATFORM:** DS  
**GENRE:** Puzzle  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q4 2006

**H**ERE'S A BIT OF Japanese gaming trivia we learned courtesy of this game. *Gunpey* is in fact a remake of a puzzle title originally released on the Wonderswan, an Asia-only handheld. It's named after Gunpei Yokoi, a legendary figure at Nintendo who was responsible for, amongst other things, designing the GBA. Alas, Yokoi-san was killed in a car accident in 1997, but his memory lives on in this more musical version of the game. It's being developed by Tetsuya Mizuguchi's Q Entertainment, best known for *Ninety-Nine Nights* and *Lumines*. The latter probably played a role in this game's new style, but the basic system remains – complete a line in the grid before it reaches the top.



## THE SOPRANOS: ROAD TO RESPECT

**DEVELOPER:** THQ  
**PUBLISHER:** THQ  
**PLATFORM:** PS2, 360  
**GENRE:** Freeform  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q4 2006

**S**INCE THE FREE-FORM GAME model has become popular, it seems to be becoming the favoured way game companies are telling gangster stories. In the tradition of another mob-powered game, *The Godfather*, THQ plans to bring HBO's *The Sopranos* to consoles. Players will play as the illegitimate son of Big Pussy, the made man who got offed by Tony and co. for being a snitch. But revenge doesn't seem to be the motive. Instead, it's to grow a reputation with Tony Soprano and his merry band of made men. Go around New Jersey taking orders from mobsters and visiting locations from the show. By taking turf from a rival group in a new mob war and exhorting money and control, players must rise up the ranks of the Soprano mob family to eventually become the number one man. Sound familiar?



## RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

**DEVELOPER:** Insomniac  
**PUBLISHER:** Sony  
**PLATFORM:** PS3  
**GENRE:** Action  
**RELEASE DATE:** 2007

**I**NSOMNIAC, THE TEAM BEHIND the popular *Ratchet & Clank* series, has decided to change its scenery a bit and move into the first-person shooter arena. *Resistance: Fall of Man* plans to bring the action and intensity of an alien invasion to the PS3. Based in the 1950s, World War II never happened. Instead, an alien race called the Chimera has arrived, complete with the annoying habit of taking over other species to make its own numbers larger. Naturally Homo Sapiens are not going to stand for this and a war breaks out. The player, as a soldier trying to stop the Chimera, will get mean weapons and large levels in a game that is looking particularly good. It has definite promise for future PS3 owners looking for a lot of action.



## THE MARK

**DEVELOPER:** Jowood  
**PUBLISHER:** Jowood  
**PLATFORM:** PC  
**GENRE:** Action  
**RELEASE DATE:** Q4 2006

**T**HE PROBLEM WITH THE War on Terror is that terrorists are now the world's leading bogeymen. But the practice of terrorism and guerrilla warfare are hardly old ones and terrorists – whatever their motives – have always been bad-guy molds for movies and games for years. So we doubt JoWood is trying to play on the events of the bombings in London. Still, terrorists are afoot and they plan to nuke the capital of the UK. It's up to soldier Steve Fletcher and mercenary Austin Hawke to stop the bad guys, get back the nuke and make sure that fish-and-chips remains a choice on London pub menus. The game sounds as if both characters will be playable in two separate threads that tie into each other. What we do know is that it will be an action-packed FPS, featuring some pretty decent visuals.



## CAFFEINE POST-ITS

As anyone could tell you, a monitor covered in post-it notes is a monitor happy to serve its master. By combining the time-honoured tradition of coffee and post-its, we've invented the caffeine post-its. Now, every time you leave yourself a little yellow square reminder to pick up milk or call your mom, you'll also get a small buzz to carry you until the next memo you have to leave yourself. Less coffee cups to wash, too.



## SOFT & FUZZY KEYBOARD AND MOUSE

Taking inspiration from the NERF controller recently released to appease very angry gamers who enjoy turning their controllers into projectile weapons against the television, we've come up with the Soft & Fuzzy Keyboard and Mouse. This set of warm, cuddly peripherals works just as well as any keyboard and mouse – except the plush coverings around the edges ensure that no amount of double-fisted slamming will ever halt their function.



## KINETIC ENERGY RECHARGE BAG

Saving the best for last, this hypothetical and totally non-existent bag uses the kinetic energy from walking around with it, to charge devices such as laptops, portable media players or wireless devices. You simply put your laptop in the bag, hook up the power cable and walk around – all that kinetic energy gets transformed into delicious electric juice and fed to the laptop, ensuring a fresh and energetic device when you reach your destination.





# MOTORSTORM

**Developer:** Evolution   **Publisher:** SCEI   **Distributor:** SK Games   **Genre:** Racing   **Platforms:** PS3   **Release:** 2007

**M**OTORSTORM ENDED UP WITH the unfortunate weight on its shoulders when it first appeared as one of the PlayStation 3's debut game announcements. Along with the next *Killzone*, the video demonstrated a final vision of the game, but duped a lot of us into believing it would actually look like that. Now, nearly two years later, the game has appeared several times in a playable form. If your expectations on the visuals are set to the initial video, you're likely to be a bit disappointed. But *Motorstorm* is nonetheless a next-gen game and suitably visually stunning, with dust and mud spraying into the air and accumulating on the vehicles. The video in question also transferred another element of excitement, mainly the highly kinetic racing action across rocky and dusty desert planes – and that appears to be well in place.

If you had visions of making dirt tracks and a lot of dust while

racing bikes, ATVs and other off-road monsters, *Motorstorm* is likely to deliver. Here the rubber meets the dirt to create two kinds of feedback. Firstly, there's the physics engine, which creates all the bucking and bouncing you want to grind out of the engine, then there is the terrain, which deforms as racers move over it. Mud tracks will be persistent, changing the lay of the track's surface. Suitably the vehicles' physics interact with this, which basically means that the times racers haul ass around the track, the more it changes. The game's claim is that no lap around a track will ever be the same. While that sounds like ambitious marketing hype, the idea of deforming tracks affecting the race is definitely exciting.

The controls, though, betray the game's simple nature – especially the inclusion of a boost. In spite of advanced physics and new bumps





in the road, *Motorstorm* aims to walk the line between simulation and arcade race, so it's not an alternative to more technical off-road racers. Instead, in tune with arcade racers, the action is more immediate and high-speed. *Motorstorm* will even award players for aggressive driving, hinting that pole position might not be the only way to win. Variation will come in 35 vehicles spread across seven classes, including the aforementioned ATVs and dirt bikes, as well as 4x4s and semi-trucks. A heavier vehicle is more stable, but a bike has more speed while an ATV creates a bit less risk when you plan to land on just one wheel at a time.

*Motorstorm* looks thoroughly next-gen, but it is not stopping there and makes use of the extra power to bring a few new dimensions to the racing genre. We'll be sure to see plenty of other games follow its lead and it's definitely going to be a highlight in the PlayStation 3's launch line-up. **NAG**



# PREVIEW







# STRANGLEHOLD

Developer: Midway

Publisher: Midway

Distributor: TBA

Genre: Action

Platforms: 360

Release: Q1 2007

THERE SEEMS LITTLE POINT to name-drop John Woo's name too much, since his movies of late don't explain the director's legacy. During his heyday, Woo directed movies such as *Bullet in the Head* and *Killer*, both seen as milestones in his career. But his high-octane action style was at its peak with *Hard Boiled*, a movie that earned his movies the distinctions of being 'gun ballets'. Basically characters shot endless rounds of ammunition while jumping over counters and against walls, using the environment as their secondary weapon. Imagine Jackie Chan, but less jumping through small gaps and much more gunfire. Violent and destructive, few directors could match Woo's powerful action sequences, but they became inspirations for many, including game developers. Many writers and games coined *Max Payne* as the game John Woo would make, so *Stranglehold* might seem very familiar to fans of *Max*'s escapades.

The game is a sequel to *Hard Boiled*, the movies

that starred Chow Yun-Fat as "Tequila" Yuen, the toughest cop in Hong Kong. The plot involves a cop killing that implicates someone in his family – soon Tequila travels to Los Angeles and runs into bigger problems with organised crime, corrupt officials and other things that he has to sort out. He does this, naturally, with guns – preferably twin Berretas – and lots of sliding over things and causing maximum destruction. The game loves the concept and as such we're tempted to call this game *Max Payne*'s next-gen spiritual successor. But that remains to be seen once the game is released. In the meantime, though, it sounds exciting.

Most surfaces in the game are interactive and an action key will let Tequila use the environment to kick over tables for cover or run up the railing of a staircase. He can run up walls or grab chandeliers to swing to the other side. Alternatively the chandelier can be shot at, bringing it crashing down on the bad

guys. The high level of interactivity also means that the levels are incredibly destructive. While it's unlikely that players will be able to blow holes into the wall so that outside onlookers can peer in on the gunfight, bottles shatter, tables break and concrete chips away as they get hit by bullets.

Another hallmark from *Max Payne*'s action is the liberal use of slow motion. A lot of actions will automatically engage slow motion, but the payoff is that the battles will be busy and intense. This is the work of the development team – Woo and his company Tiger Hill's involvement is with the story and storyboards, while Chow Yun-Fat has contributed his looks and voice to the project. Whether it will reach the cinematic levels of *Hard Boiled* remains to be seen, but it hardly matter much if *Stranglehold* proves to be a solid action game. **NAG**



# MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

Developer: Creative Assembly

Publisher: Sega

Distributor: WWE

Genre: Strategy

Platforms: PC

Release: Q4 2006

**T**HE *TOTAL WAR* SERIES lives in a class of its own. There are games that combine real-time battles with turn-based strategy, but *Total War* brought it to a new level of scale and depth. Players command huge armies in historic battles. But even massive armies, especially the massive armies, demanded a lot of strategy, using units smartly. Meanwhile, armies are built and fostered in the turn-based part of the game. Here movements are decided, soldiers are recruited and everything is managed until the player conquers the entire game map.

With each iteration, the *Total War* games have nipped and tucked at their features, visuals and playability. Civic management became a feature of the turn-based portion and armies became vaster and more manageable. The game areas also became larger and the pool of nations increased. All this culminated in *Medieval II: Total War*. The aim, though, isn't to declare an even more staggering unit cap, since the series already boasts that in the thousands. Instead, the game engine has been built from the ground up and all the areas have been improved, while new features have been added.

Set from the years 1080 to 1530, players will take charge of a country, split into several provinces. The plan is to invade neighbouring countries and take their land, thus building armies is the main vocal point. The real-time battles are stunning, since Creative Assembly worked on giving the soldiers more individual characteristics, as well as more robust

animation and AI. Swords clash and cavalry trample foot soldiers and catapults hurl rocks towards the massive walls of a city. Over 250 unique units feature in the game, so the armies will be varied and demand different tactics. But often the battle is won or lost even before it has begun, because before you can fight, you need to choose who to fight and when. The larger changes to the system are in the turn-based section. Players can now build cities and castles, and in *Civilization*-style build improvements and adjust the tax rates. Cities generate wealth and trade, which aid diplomacy as well as your war fund. Castles, meanwhile, recruit soldiers and do it much faster than in previous titles. The ratio between these two constructs play a big role in how well a war will go for you, so the developers say that the two can be switched countless times. Diplomacy and religion also play much bigger roles. One of the major focuses will be on the Roman Catholic Church and its roles in the Middle Ages. Players who side with this institution will get a lot of financial and political help from the Pope, but also has to take part in crusades and stay on the Pope's good side. A player not aligned with the Catholic nations risks attack from them. But it is also possible to help a priest eventually become a Pope, even if it means assassinating opponents or rigging the papal elections, so all of this tie closely to political strategy. Players will be able to assassinate any key figures, including the Pope himself. With over 17 nations to choose from, things are going to be more varied than just that situation. *Medieval II* is not straying too far from the series line, but it looks like the changes are being made in all the right places, handing strategy buffs more depth to play with. **NAG**









# ELEBITS

IN A HAPPY PLACE full of peace and harmony, humans share the world with little creatures called Elebits, curious Pikmin-like critters with fur on their tummies and a penchant for generating power. Because of this we found the Elebits very useful and soon they became the world's primary power source. Everything was going great, until the Elebits decided to stop working and everything was plunged into darkness.

We have to admit that the premise behind *Elebits* is a bit weird, mainly because the stylings of the game lean more towards *Katamari Damacy* and *Pikmin*'s lunacy, not a premise that gels very well with global catastrophe. But you have to take the game with a pinch of salt, much like when hurling *Pikmin* at a large bug doesn't pluck the strings of your conscience too much. In *Elebits* players navigate around a variety of environments, using a 'zap gun' to rummage through everything and find the elusive and slothful Elebits. Once one is spotted, zapping it with the gun a few times will encourage it back to work as well as give a charge to the gun. It sounds a bit terrible, but the jist of it doesn't seem to be Elebit slavery, even though the story elements are a bit vague. Anyhow, a zapped Elebit is a happy Elebit and happy Elebits create charges. These power stuff in the world, but it also enhanced the zap gun. Some Elebits even give players experience, all of which contributes to upgrades to the gun. The objects in the world all have different weights and voltage requirements, so using the charge in the gun determines what can be moved. Essentially it means rummaging around, looking for Elebits, while the underlying mechanics point to more involved puzzles later on. The interactivity of the environment is a key feature of the game. Using the Wii's remote, the vantage is a first-person one and objects are manipulated by zapping them and moving the remote. Levels usually have a time limit, such as make x amount of voltage points in a few minutes. Various goals mean that levels can be replayed, though other than cap Elebits nothing else has been revealed.

So far *Elebits* has been growing on those who have seen it, but the idea of going through a house looking for small critters and zapping them still hasn't taken root. Yet the concept is interesting and holds a lot of promise. This combined with the cute and endearing characters could make for a great experience and maybe many hours of fun, especially as part of the new ideas that will come with the Wii. **NAG**

Developer: Konami Publisher: Konami Distributor: TBA Genre: Puzzle Platforms: Wii Release: 2007







## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Developer

Sega

## ■ Publisher

Sega

## ■ Distributor

TBA

## ■ Genre

Combat

## ■ Release Date

Q2 2007



## VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

THE POTENTIAL *VIRTUA FIGHTER* audience can be divided into two camps. Either you are an avid fan and you can't wait for the console version – mainly because the arcade game is far out of your reach – or you are aching for some more fighting action to complement the many technical VS titles on the market. Fortunately *Virtua Fighter 5* will uphold the recent tradition of having a one-on-one brawler in a console's launch line-up for the rest of the world, but Japan and the US will have to wait for a 2007 launch.

*Virtua Fighter 5* refines the series' three-button combat system just slightly. The big news for fans are that two new characters are part of the pack: El Blaze and Eileen. El Blaze is a professional wrestler and suitably his style is more flamboyant and high-flying than the standard fighters. Eileen, on the other hand, is a student of Monkey style kung fu, which makes her very agile and quick, complementing her smaller frame and short reach. More casual observers might point to two new characters not being much, but these kinds of games don't like to mix things up too much. There are new arenas, though, as well as classic VF stages, but all in new next-gen splendour. Visually the game is fittingly stunning, with fluid animations and great arenas.

Gamers in the second camp, those looking for a good fighting game on the PS3, will not be disappointed either. Even if the roster and features are mostly similar to VF4 (VF.net and other features from that game will obviously appear in the fifth), the visuals and slick style of the game will carry it nonetheless. With a series that has survived over a decade and started the 3D fighting genre which brought *Tekken* and *Soul Calibur* to players everywhere, VF5 isn't planning to rock the boat too much. Heavy enthusiasts will also be interested in the Virtua Stick, a joystick peripheral Sega showed at TGS and plans to ship with the game in Japan – and hopefully to other regions as well. **NAG**





IN 2005, A SINGLE WORD IGNITED THE WORLD OF GAMING  
**LIKE NEVER BEFORE.**

FIRST ENCOUNTER ASSAULT RECON

**F.E.A.R.**

EXTRACTION POINT

THE F.E.A.R. CONTINUES  
OCTOBER 2006

[whatisfear.com](http://whatisfear.com)

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## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Developer

TimeGate Studios / Monolith Productions

## ■ Publisher

Sierra

## ■ Distributor

Mi Digital [011] 723-1967

## ■ Genre

Action

## ■ Release Date

30 October



## F.E.A.R. EXTRACTION POINT

**D**ESPITE NOT BEING EXCLUSIVELY developed by Monolith, it seems the addition of TimeGate Studios into the mix hasn't done any damage. *Extraction Point* continues literally the second where *F.E.A.R.* ends, which normally might be considered a risky move but seems to be working out for *Extraction Point*. The actual story for *EP* is being kept under wraps from Monolith's side so little is known about how *EP* incorporates the various loose ends from *F.E.A.R.* The developers are adamant however that this expansion should take players between six to eight hours to complete, roughly the same as *F.E.A.R.* did. The recently released demo revealed a few of the new things in *EP*, including the new debris-generating weapon, the Minigun. The environments themselves were very reminiscent of *F.E.A.R.* - industrial complexes, nondescript corridors and an obscene amount of grey cement.

A new church environment was briefly shown, though once again the developers aren't talking about what players can expect from the expansion. One new enemy specifically from the demo are the invisible Shadow Puppets, doing a good job of scaring the bejeezus out of you when you least expect it. Other than that, and whatever Monolith is keeping secret, *Extraction Point* is every bit as *F.E.A.R.* as the original was. The Slow-Mo naturally makes a return along with the obscene amounts of environmental destruction you can achieve. The creepy feel of *F.E.A.R.* has been transplanted successfully to *Extraction Point*, based on the demo, along with a little extra due to the team's subject matter experience. Barring a monumental plot failure, there is no doubt *Extraction Point* will pick up the mantle and run with it, much to the delight of fans. **NAG**





# Accelerate Your Digital Home Lifestyle

## ASUS Motherboard Brings Digital Home Features to Intel Core2 Extreme and Core2 Duo CPU Platforms

*Everyone is talking about digital home these days, so today let us introduce to you a new motherboard that is an excellent foundation for building a digital home. The P5W DH Deluxe offers some great digital home features to go with Intel's Core2 Extreme and Core2 Duo processors and ATI CrossFire graphics.*

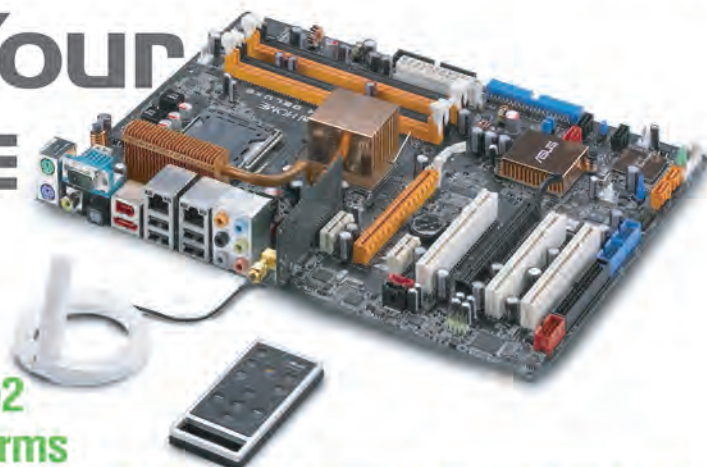
### DH Remote - Control the Computer from a Distance

Use the DH Remote to turn the computer on and off, activate and of course access and manage the various digital home features offered by the P5W DH Deluxe. The remote provides conventional functions, such as volume control, play, pause, fast forward and rewind, as well. With the DH Remote, users are no longer tied down next to the PC.



### EZ-Backup - Your Data are in Good Hands

No driver, no configuration, just plug and activate RAID to backup your data instantaneously EZ-Backup utilizes SATA2 technology to arrange RAID 1 (default) or RAID 0 systems without BIOS or any other setup process. EZ-Backup is ideal for anyone who wishes to back up hard drive data but doesn't want the hassle of complicated software configurations.



### WiFi-AP Solo - Wireless Connection Even When the System Sleeps

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## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Developer

Team Clover

## ■ Publisher

Capcom

## ■ Distributor

Ster Kinekor Games [011] 445-7960

## ■ Genre

Action/Brawler

## ■ Release Date

Q1 2007



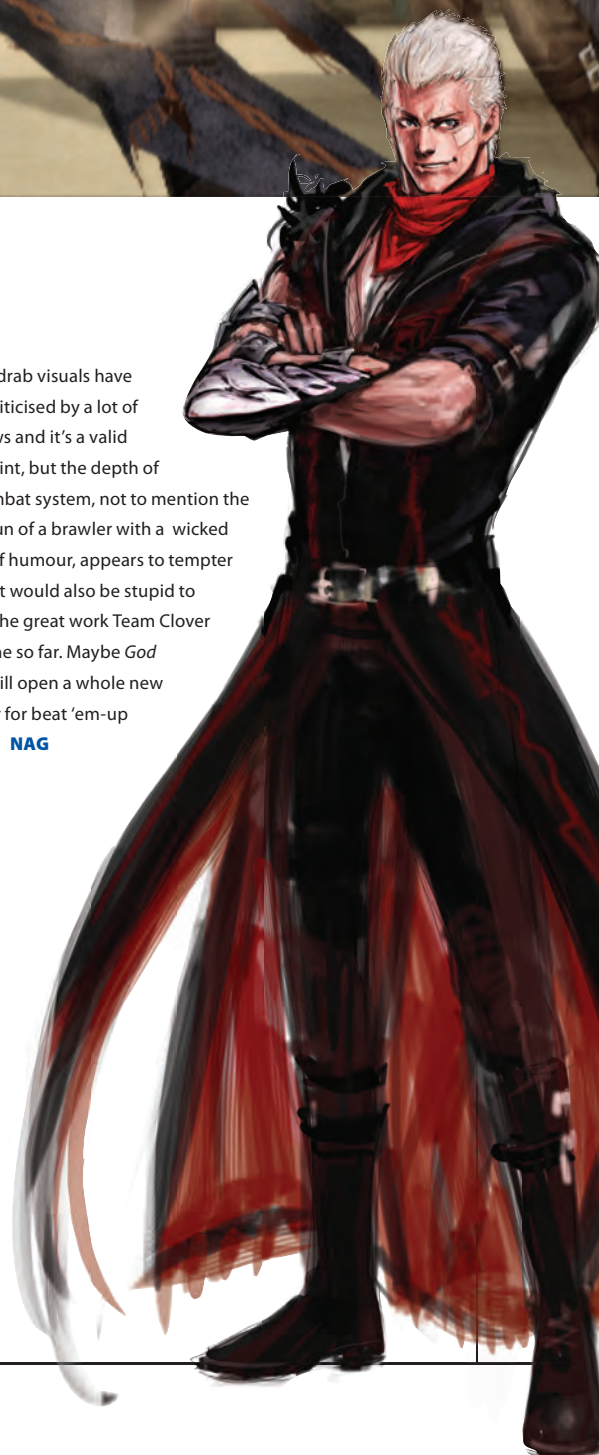
## GOD HAND

FROM THE STUDIO THAT brought the world *Okami* and *Viewtiful Joe* comes *God Hand*, a spectacular story of a guy who loses his arm, has it restored with something much more godly and proceeds to pummel the local bad guys! Yeah, it doesn't sound that interesting and the visuals do look lacking, all things considered. But the main aim of *God Hand* is not to blow your visual synapses, instead to deliver a chance to do a lot of damage.

Gene, a roaming character, chances upon some ruffians trying to sever the arm of a girl named Olivia. He stops them, but loses his own arm. Olivia comes to his aid and gives him the God Hand, which is a new arm with some serious battering capacity. He then sets out to fight Elvis henchmen, bondage queens and guerrillas in wrestling masks. As we mentioned, Team Clover is busy developing this game, which by face value might look like a bland brawler. But in the tradition of another Capcom title, *God Hand* promises a lot of depth and almost endless combo chains. Three of the four main buttons on the controllers are dedicated to fighting and enemies have the unfortunate trait of not dying until the player lets them. Essentially that means endless beating the hell out of a slob unlucky enough to try and take Gene on. Gene can also pull a neat stunt called the God Reel. With the tap of a shoulder button, players can select random moves that chain into one big auto-combo, complete with a groin punch. The locations, which vary from a town in the Wild West to caves and a carnival, provide plenty of weapons to beat down opponents.

The whole affair is very over-the-top and has a twisted sense of humour that fans of *Devil May Cry* might enjoy. But the fighting system hopes to have a lot of depth, giving beat 'em-up aficionados something to look forward to. Players will be able to create custom attacks, ranging from basic chains to extravagant combos.

The drab visuals have been criticised by a lot of previews and it's a valid complaint, but the depth of the combat system, not to mention the sheer fun of a brawler with a wicked sense of humour, appears to tempter critics. It would also be stupid to forget the great work Team Clover has done so far. Maybe *God Hand* will open a whole new chapter for beat 'em-up games. **NAG**





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## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Developer

Firefly Studios

## ■ Publisher

2K Games

## ■ Distributor

SK Games (0111) 445-7960

## ■ Genre

Strategy

## ■ Release Date

Q4 2006



## STRONGHOLD LEGENDS

**S**TRONGHOLD TOOK A BOLD step into a new branch of the real-time strategy genre. It celebrated 'turtling', the concept of a player fortifying his or her base to perfection, keeping the barbarians at the gate so to speak. There were also other land owners to overrun and castles to lay siege to, so the fortress building went hand-in-hand with managing your little settlement and making sure the villagers got enough resources together to build forces. The concept has evolved somewhat, but the core mechanic has remained through three major games in the series. Castle owners gather resources by appealing to their peasants. Happy peasants gather wood, mine and spend cash at the local market. Unhappy ones run for the hill, leaving your castle rather unprotected from the invading hordes. Happy peasants depend on food, shelter, protection and an appealing tax rate. This in turn lets you create soldiers and attracts even larger military types. Research also opens up new weapons and units. Your neighbours will attack you, so planning for sieges is important. Likewise you lead sieges on other castles, hopefully taking their land and thus getting more resources.

In the fourth incarnation, dubbed a sister title to *Stronghold 2*, things take a more mythical turn. *Stronghold* already founded itself in Medieval warfare, so the leap to a more mythical setting isn't a big one. There are now three factions: King Arthur, Vlad Dracul and Siegfried, tapping three different sources of mythology from East Europe, West Europe and Scandinavia and providing three different styles of castle architecture (and totaling 24 missions over three campaigns). So there will be dragons, frost giants and other monsters from fairy tales. But there will also be weapons of war and the traditional means of taking a castle to task with your siege engines lie at the heart of the matter. In fact, Firefly Studios wants to put more emphasis on the battles and tactics, instead of just castle building.

*Stronghold* is a niche series, even for the strategy market, but it has done the job solidly so far. The mythology injection in *Stronghold Legends* might seem a bit much like appealing to the new audience of RTS players, but it certainly can't hurt the prospects of the series. **NAG**





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## ESSENTIAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Developer

Eden Studios

### Publisher

Atari

### Distributor

Megarom [011]234-2680

### Genre

Survival Horror

### Release Date

TBA

# ALONE IN THE DARK™

IT IS NOT KNOWN if the Edward Carnby in this new, upcoming *Alone in the Dark* bears any relation to the same Edward Carnby from the first game (which was set in the 1920s). Eden Studios has remained frustratingly tight-lipped about the lead protagonist in the upcoming title, and equally skimpy with details about the combat systems that the new game will use. What we do know with surety, however, is that this new *AITD* will be a much better game than the previous failure.

So far, *AITD* sports impressive visuals as laid bare by the trailers and screenshots that detail Carnby as well as Central Park, the main area where the game takes place. Central Park itself contains its own zoo, theaters as well as restaurants, all of which will be areas in which the game plays out. Eden notes that using Central Park as a location fulfills several key points: its real world nature is hoped to serve as a frightening contrast to the more surreal of the game's themes, and the metropolitan nature of the location lends itself easily to the story due to the various cultural interpretations of the afterlife. Central Park is also a large, open area in stark contrast to the usual claustrophobic areas favoured by so many horror games.

Very little is known about how combat will function in the new game, though Eden has mentioned that the game play will be 'highly varied', including elements of puzzle-solving, stealth, melee combat and exploration. Havok 3.0 is being used for the physics, which Eden notes will be highly intuitive. Their goal is to avoid players having to learn an entirely new control scheme, putting emphasis instead on the 'logical' use of nearby elements during a survival situation. This might include fire, incorporated in such a way that it will affect gameplay. The creatures Carnby will face are being powered by advanced scripting with the help of next-gen middleware developer Kynogon, who has been involved with developers such as Planet Moon, Lionhead Studios, Ascaron and even EA.

The most well-known and intriguing aspect of the new *Alone in the Dark* is the narrative structure. The game adopts the episodic nature of popular TV, breaking it down into sessions of 30 minutes or so instead of one long traditional structure. Each session will even have its own conclusion cinematic sequences, as well as 'coming up next' clips of the next part. When you return to the game after a break, you can even be treated to a brief plot summary to bring you up to speed. This is a very new and innovative way of handling the usually feature-length nature of a game, and so far it sounds inspired. After such a long series of mostly vapid *Alone in the Dark* games, it seems that perhaps finally Carnby will find himself in a horror worthy of the series that started it all. **NAG**





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# FAMILY GUY

## FREAKIN' SWEET! IT'S THE FAMILY GUY GAME!

South Africa is a newcomer to the world of the *Family Guy*, Seth McFarlane's coarse and incredibly funny animated show starring blue-collar worker Peter, his red-head wife Lois, their three children Chris, Meg and Stewie, not to mention the suave talking dog Brian. Since starting in 2000, the show has been canceled twice, but fan response and high DVD sales showed that *Family Guy* has a strong and loyal following wherever it's shown. The show continued and recently concluded its fifth season on the US. So, like *The Simpsons* and *South Park*, a game was inevitable. We chatted with veteran developers High Voltage about why we're lucky there's a man who positively can do all the things that make us laugh and cry.









**High Voltage's games don't generally get critical acclaim, but your games sell strongly and fans of the specific franchises enjoy them. Are you taking the same approach with *Family Guy*?**

Actually we thought we would spice things up a bit and try for both critical acclaim AND strong sales this time. But yes, our process on *Family Guy* was the same on all of our licensed titles, which is to identify those elements of a license that make it popular and figure out a way to put them into our game.

**Considering how the show was resurrected from the ashes by its fans, are you intimidated by what *Family Guy* viewers will think of the game?**

Intimidated, no. Anxious, yes. We know the fans of the show can be pretty brutal and opinionated and so we spend a lot of time working to make this game appeal to fans. But we were hired to make an interactive experience rather than a passive one. We hope the fans realise this and will not be too hard on us for those things we had to adjust or add in order to make a game about the show, not an episode.

**Will Brian, Peter and Stewie's storylines play concurrently, like in the TV series?**

Ah, now this is one of those "freakin' sweet" things we didn't have to change. Yes, the storylines will be running concurrently, just like an episode. Gameplay switches between the three characters at various moments, with everyone coming together at the very end.

**Is Seth McFarlane, the writers and the rest of the voice cast involved?**

Everyone here at High Voltage and at 2K realised the importance of having Seth MacFarlane as part of this project. Mr. MacFarlane is definitely doing his voice roles; in fact he did the most voice acting of anyone in the game! So have no fear... Peter, Stewie, and Brian will all sound like they should. The writers went over our scripts several times, helping make sure that all the lines had that '*Family Guy*' flavour. And the rest of the regular cast signed on as Seth did, so we have the voices of Alex Borstein, Seth Greene, Mila Kunis, Mike Henry, Patrick Warburton, and all the rest of your *Family Guy* favourites.

**How many fart jokes are there?**

Fart jokes? There are fart jokes in *Family Guy*? How could you think we would stoop to such low-brow tasteless humour in such a fine and politically-correct product? By the way, pull my finger...

**Will fans get to have a chicken fight?**

Ha! Nice try, but you'll have to play the game to find out.

**Will there be a lot of the irrelevant screw-ball moments the show's fans love?**

Will there be non-sequiturs in a *Family Guy* game? Does a Quagmire shag in the woods? Of course there will be non-sequiturs! These will be short mini-games that players will be introduced to just as in the episodes. When a character starts saying something like, "That reminds me of the time...", then you'll know what's coming. Winning these mini-games will give the player some benefit, but even failing the game itself will not deprive them of the humour







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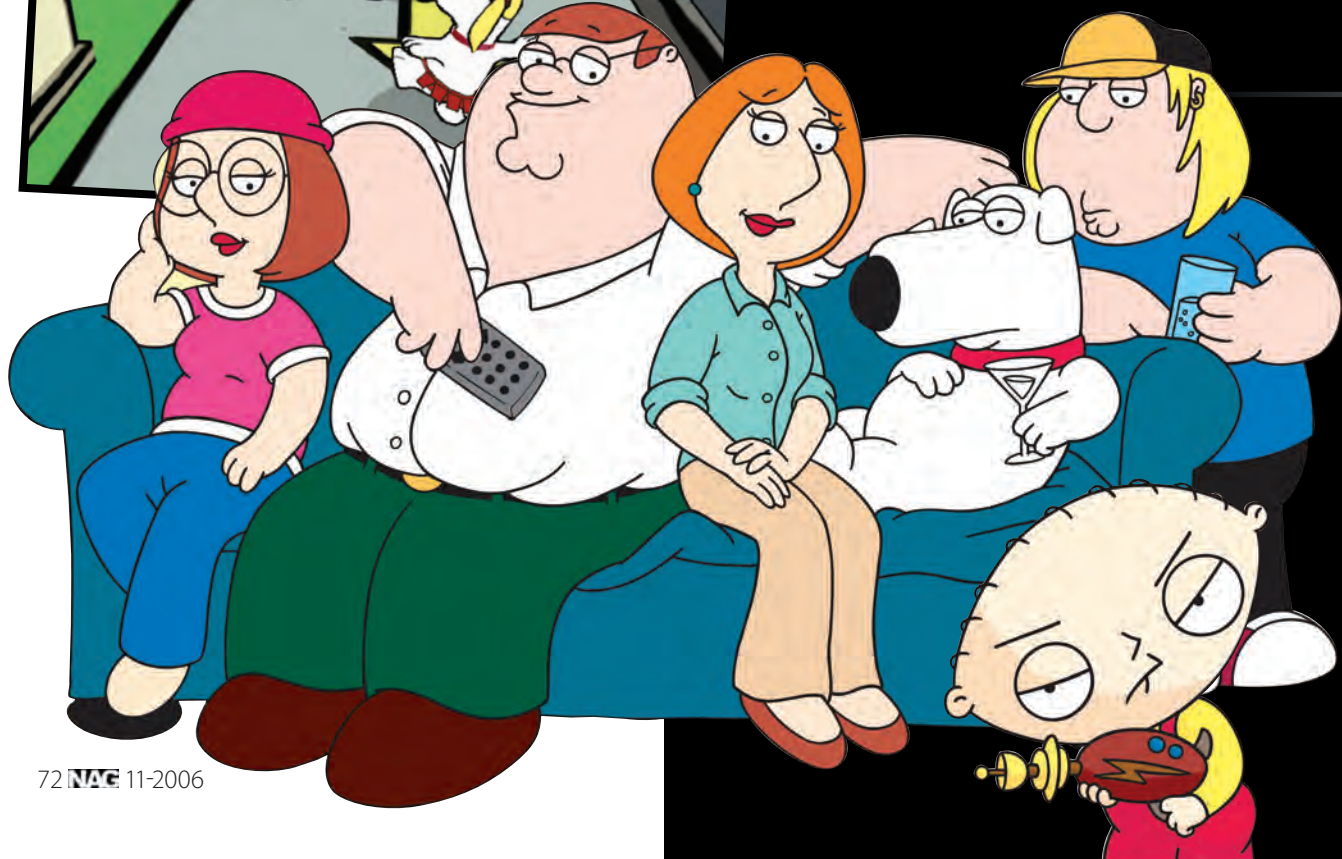
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of it. And yes, fans can expect to see some of the classics as well as some new ones.

#### **Will Lois' kung fu skills ever be used?**

Hmm, her kung fu skills? No. But you do see her in her kung fu outfit. And her rock-star outfit. And her bondage outfit. And in her lingerie outfit. How's that for fan service?

#### **Do you think license games would do well in the episodic model?**

Certainly. Games can tell stories just as well as television or movies can. As long as the game stays true to the license, the stories can go on as long as people want to have them.

#### **Family Guy has built a strong following on the Adult Swim channel. What is the chance of other shows aired there becoming games?**

Ah, that you would have to ask Cartoon Network. As for me, that depends entirely on the show. But if they have good characters and you can find a developer with a real passion for the programme, I would say that the odds are good. **NAG**

### **HIGH VOLTAGE GAMES**

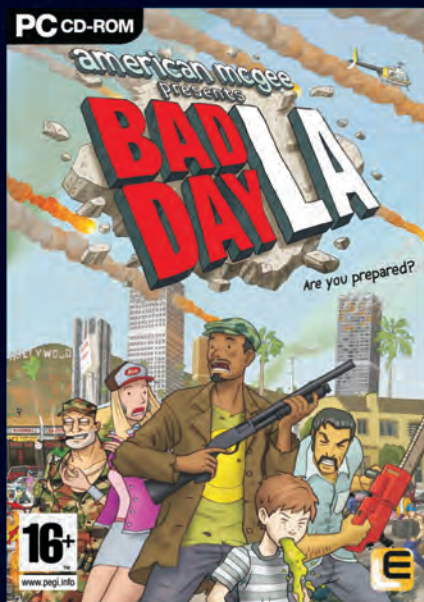
A seven year veteran in the industry, High Voltage has developed a lot of games for high profile licenses for companies such as Disney and LEGO. But for that same reason, the name doesn't ring much of a bell with enthusiasts and reviews of its games are not frequently seen in specialist press publications. Still, there were some more recent releases that you would know: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Leisure Suite Larry: Magna Cum Lauda* – two games received with mixed reception from the more hardcore players. But that didn't stop the games from doing well in retail, nor for that matter a large part of High Voltage's games. Basically, High Voltage knows how to develop licensed games, but not like the more esoteric examples of *Chronicles of Riddick* and *The Warriors*.



# DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND



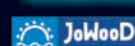
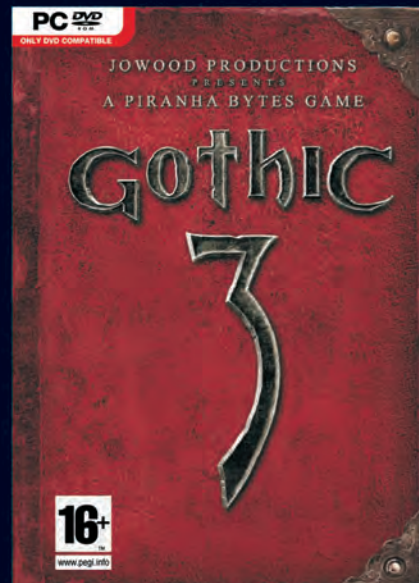
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# REVIEWS

## WEB SCORES

### AGE OF PIRATES [PC]

NAG [100]	60
Metacritic [100]	57
Gamerankings [100]	54



### CITY LIFE [PC]

NAG [100]	72
Metacritic [100]	76
Gamerankings [100]	76



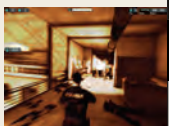
### COMPANY OF HEROES [PC]

NAG [100]	81
Metacritic [100]	94
Gamerankings [100]	94



### EL MATADOR [PC]

NAG [100]	67
Metacritic [100]	59
Gamerankings [100]	65



### DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY: THE TAKEOVER [PSP]

NAG [100]	89
Metacritic [100]	79
Gamerankings [100]	78



### JUST CAUSE [PS2]

NAG [100]	90
Metacritic [100]	67
Gamerankings [100]	62



### SHINOBIDO [PS2]

NAG [100]	65
Metacritic [100]	59
Gamerankings [100]	NA



### TEKKEN DARK RESSURECTION [PSP]

NAG [100]	83
Metacritic [100]	88
Gamerankings [100]	88



The ratings in this section, apart from the NAG ratings, are not the opinion of NAG Magazine. Duh. All scores were correct at time of printing.

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76	Just Cause	[PS2]
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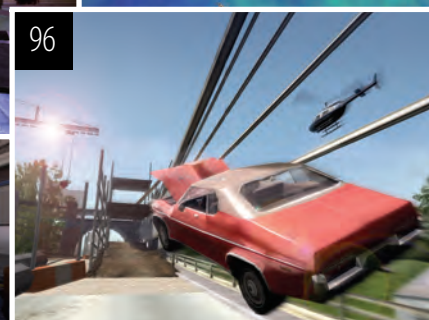
92



90



96



86



## WHAT WE'RE PLAYING...



### ADVENT RISING [PC]

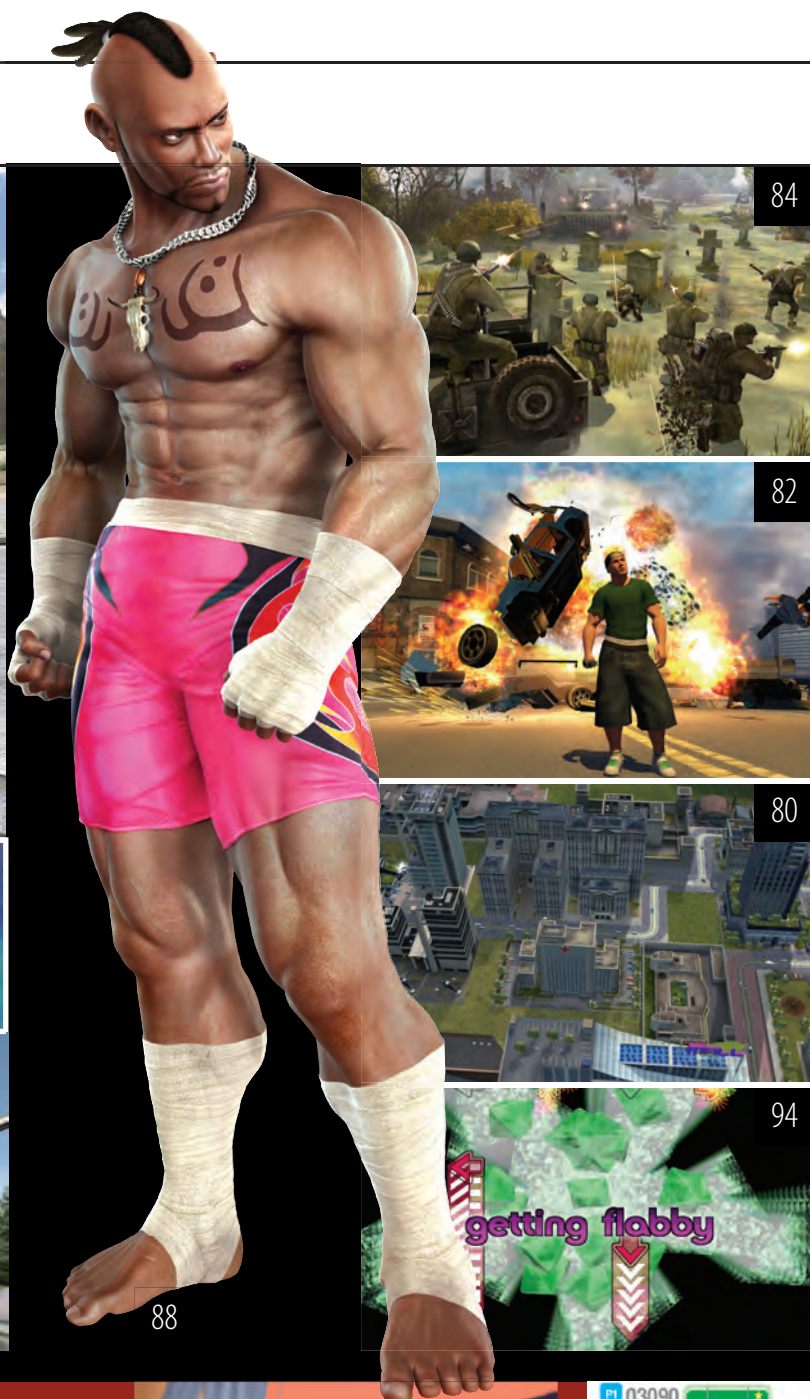
While the game may not have made much of a splash at retail, its cheap \$20 price tag on Steam certainly makes it look more appealing. *Advent Rising* is not a good game, and not even the name of science fiction writer Orson Scott Card can really help with that. If you manage to look past the terrible control scheme, contrived plot line and 'oh-so-cool' features slapped on last-minute, you'll notice that *Advent Rising* does have one thing going for it - it really, really tries.



### EL MATADOR [PC]

*Max Payne* with Spanish dressing, *El Matador* is a rather bland experience despite the origins of it's inspiration. The back of the box promises 'hard-hitting, movie-style storyline' and that much is indeed true - depending on what you consider a good movie. For all its failings however, the lack of any other *Max Payne* emups around makes *El Matador* the only place to go for a bullet-time dodge combined with shotgun love. We're that desperate.





## AWARDS

### EDITOR'S CHOICE

This prestigious award gets bestowed upon games that really catch NAG's collective eye. The Editor's Choice award is for games that have some indefinable trait that just make them stand head and shoulders above the rest, peering about nervously. Usually, games that are fun, visually stunning and which leave a lasting impression are honoured with the coveted Editor's Choice. It's almost similar to knighthood, but not as humiliating!



### CLASSIC AWARD

Any game that scores above 85% gets the much-envied Classic Award in honour of its achievement. Above 85% represents a game that has managed to set itself apart from the crowd of mediocrity – a game worthy of some attention. Games awarded the Classic Award are games you can trust.



## SCORING

NAG is different, NAG is special. We score games on the 50% principle, meaning that we regard 50% as 'average'. It's neither here, nor there. 50% is the perfect middle ground. A game that scores 50% is a game that does nothing wrong, but nothing right either. If a game won't install properly, naturally it scores less than 50%. If a game brings something new to the table, or does what it does well, it'll go up from the 50% average. 60% is above average, a game that might appeal to some. 70% is a game that's pushing its own limits slightly, one that's perhaps putting a new spin on common ideas. 80% represents a game with a difference, one of quality and as few rough edges as possible. 90% is outstanding, a game that has separated itself from the horde to do its own thing, and does it well. No game will ever achieve 100%, because if a game ever did, we'd be out of jobs. Nobody would play anything else anyway.



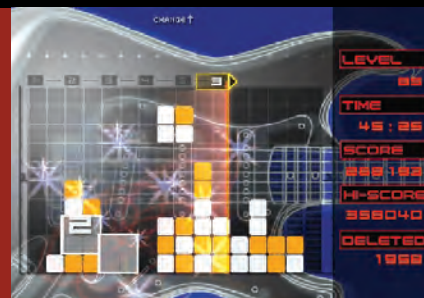
### KINGDOM HEARTS 2 [PS2]

It took only three hours of continuous play, no joke, before the main title faded in. And while we appreciate a good-hearted tutorial that tries to blend in with the story, we have to question the rather lengthy approach *Kingdom Hearts 2* is taking. Once the miniature epic of the first portion of the game slides by, things start to thankfully pick up pace a little. Hopefully, this time around there will be no Tarzan levels to lull us to sleep.



### SINGSTAR ROCKS [PS2]

A couple of microphones, a couple of idiots and a copy of *Singstar Rocks* is the quickest way to empty out your house, especially after a late party where a few stragglers refuse to relinquish your couch. We're not quite sure if Franz Ferdinand intended his song to be sung in G-flat with a trace of drunken slurring, but it certainly sounds good that way after a few attempts have numbed the eardrums into submission.



### LUMINES [PSP]

With *Lumines Live* (for Xbox Live Arcade) still months away and news of *Lumines 2* teasing us with promises of liquid joy, we had no choice but to charge that idle PSP and dig out the diminutive *Lumines* UMD. The core gameplay still remains addictive, the puzzle element supports a synergistic relationship with the music for a wholesome slice of synesthesia. Or, more simply: pretty blocks fall and happy music plays.



# JUST CAUSE



**J**UST CAUSE IS AN interesting example for something. What for, we don't know, but it's interesting. The 360 game, judging by the demo, is stunning and huge. It was easy to come to an early judgment that the PS2 version would and could simply not meet this demand. It wasn't simply the graphical excellence of the 360 version. The game is massive, probably besting the total land size *San Andreas* had on offer, and it is covered with a lot of jungle. This was not the kind of experience that could be inhibited by loading screens or poorly-drawn jungle panoramas. Obviously, judging by the score, we were dead wrong. The most surprising and important feature of the PS2 version is that it features the island in its entirety – and at a very low loading price. Sure, it takes a bit to get going initially and missions tend to be preceded by short loads, but once you see what is being put through the PS2, it's a surprisingly fluid experience with little slow-down and distraction. Likewise, the

jungle, cars and weather systems are on par with the massive *San Andreas*, which means it looks great. Obviously not as good as the next-gen version, but this is really splitting hairs. In the event of buying *Just Cause* for the PS2, all you'll sacrifice is the visual difference. There are a few other shortcomings as well, such as reduced environmental destruction, but you can't have everything.

None of these detract from the game itself.

As Rico Rodriguez, you are tasked by the CIA to overthrow the government of a small island nation. These are the bad guys and you are the good guy, taking sides with the guerrillas and nicer drug cartel to overthrow the powers that be. Don't be tempted to read a political message in this – the





game is far too over the top to make a serious statement. At Rico's disposal is the entire island, as well as his own range of incredible skills. Strangely, he can't sprint. But he can shoot a line into a helicopter, launch his parachute, grab the copter and hijack it. You also quite literally need a tank to really kill Rico, and that's only because he didn't pack a rocket launcher. By helping the cartel and rebels liberate settlements or take over rival cartel strongholds, Rico earns reputation, which promotes his rank with them, unlocking new weapons and vehicles. He also gets brownie points for doing countless side-quests for these factions. The main story is the CIA mission and this usually awards with safe houses and extra hardware. So Rico hops from liberation to grunt work to subversion as he travels the island, stealing its vehicles and terrorizing the local populace. In this sense, the game does restrict you. While the entire island is open from the start and extra-missions are available

everywhere, the actual liberation of the various provinces on the island are determined by your progress in the main story. In the political map a province shows up as government-controlled, rebel-controlled or politically unstable. The latter usually means the villages are ripe for liberation.

But the real fun in *Just Cause* is the random exploration. With plenty of high areas for great views and base jumping, Rico can easily swoop over kilometres of land with his parachute. Grappling a line to vehicles carries Rico into the air, while there are plenty of aircraft to nab for quicker trips. Or, if all else fails, you could always just grab a car. Being a Third-World island, a lot of the vehicles are pretty slow and the variety leans more towards cars that you can take over all kinds of terrain. Achieving higher ranks with the cartel and rebels will also unlock special vehicles at some camp locations, while improved CIA ranks will give Rico more to choose from when calling for a heavy

## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

Reviewed on PS2

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R449.99

### Developer

Avalanche Studios

### Publisher

Eidos

### Supplier

WWE (011) 462-0150

### Genre

Freeform/Action

### Age Restriction

16+

### Specifications

Players: 1

Controllers: 1



## BOTTOM LINE

An action-packed and engrossing sandbox game. Viva la Revolution!

# 90/100

### Total Overdose



### GTA San Andreas





# REVIEW

drop – when in a pinch, a vehicle in a crate can be parachuted over his location. Likewise, in most situations Rico can call for an extraction, which will transport him to a chosen base camp somewhere else on the island. Musically there aren't any radio stations, but instead a soundtrack that fades in and out depending on what Rico does. But unlike games like *Total Overdose*, the music is set to certain queues: spend 30 seconds in a helicopter and action-packed background music kicks in (even if you're not flying); start a liberation and a suitably insane back track kicks in; drive a car and fun island music starts blaring – up to the point where Rico ejects and uses his parachute because the car just went over the wrong end of a cliff.

It's a great game, largely marred by some annoying shortcomings. The map is not nearly detailed enough and there is no marker system to help with navigation. Navigating the island can be frustrating, as there are far more natural obstacles, so a better nav com would have smoothed things over. The game also doesn't make it simple to know what vehicles you have where, and excessive exploration is required if you want to find stuff like rocket-equipped helicopters. But it's a lot of fun and a great sandbox title. **NAG**







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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R250

### Developer

Deep Silver

### Publisher

Monte Cristo

### Supplier

Greenstone (021) 557-6248

### Genre

Strategy

### Age Restriction

7+

### Specifications

CPU: 1.5 GHz

Video: 64 MB Video

RAM: 256 MB RAM

HDD: 2.0 GB HDD

CD/DVD: CD

Internet: Not Required

Players: 1

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## BOTTOM LINE

A welcome addition to the collection of any city-management enthusiast. By factoring in socio-economic group tension among residents the genre has been redefined. A lack of polish lets the game down somewhat but still a title well worth playing.

**72/100**

Tycoon City: New York



Simcity 4



# CITY LIFE

**S**EGREGATION. A PECULIARITY WE need no reminding of in South Africa. Nevertheless, it plays a fundamental role in Monte Cristo's latest offering which is a challenging and engaging city management title. The rationale behind this is that City Life has a unique twist, or perhaps selling-point. In order to establish a thriving metropolis a variety of subcultures and socioeconomic groups have to be pleased. And the only way to please them is to keep them apart. It may be controversial but it is a masterstroke nonetheless and a genre many claim had reached stagnant depths has been revitalised by this inspirational feature.

The theory behind the idea is fairly simple. The powerful businessman prefers not to have a shanty town on the doorstep of his mansion. Likewise the last thing the blue collared stiff wants to see after a hard day at the powerplant is a suit driving by in a flashy car. The player's job is to keep everyone happy. The basis of the game, however, will be familiar to all devotees of city sims. With nothing but an empty piece of land a thriving metropolis must painstakingly be built up. Businesses need workers, workers need neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods need services. So the player has to be sure that there are enough jobs, and then make sure there is enough housing available for the settlers who take up those jobs. Each neighbourhood needs its infrastructure such as electricity, health services, law enforcement and waste management. All the while a close eye has to be kept on traffic congestion, redevelopment and, of course, finances. The player will be absorbed with the endless tweaking and refinement that the city demands. There is always a need to pretty up depressing neighbourhoods with parks and monuments. Likewise public transport is a must to promote maximum productivity. The title is excellent in that it does not allow the player to sit still. There is never time to sit back and admire one's work; there is always something to do.

However, the game comes into its own via the socio-economic dilemma. For a city to survive it is as much dependent on the sewerage worker as the ruthless businessman. There are six groups of resident, all unique in their desires, earning potential and way of life. The wealthier groups are made up of the Elites, Suits and Radical Chics whilst the Fringes, Blue Collars and Have Nots come up short in the financial stakes. Some of the groups can tolerate and even maintain relationships with each other. Polar opposites, however, downright abhor one another. Place two of these - say a Have Not and an Elite - in close proximity and citizen dissatisfaction will increase rapidly. Action is required to prevent sporadic outbreaks of violence. This can be accomplished by setting up a police presence to monitor the situation or building community centres which have calming influences. If the outbreaks are not initially quelled they have the ability to escalate into arson-attacks and even civil war. All the while this discontent is relayed back to the rest of the city via autonomous media outlets promoting further citizen dissatisfaction. And as City Life is a firm believer in freedom of speech the player has no control over the damaging reports which primarily affect immigration and tourism and ultimately, funding.

Although common logic would suggest segregation is the answer, keeping all the groups happy is simply not that straightforward. Why? Well every group has needs for services and entertainment. A grocery store and medical clinic might suffice for the Fringe but the higher up the social ladder a group



is placed the more extravagant their needs become. So a Radical Chic may only be happy when a shopping mall, pharmacy and police station are a short drive from their garden flat. Of course the whole conundrum here is that the services that the wealthier groups demand require employees in the moderate to low-income bracket. And as employees will not travel great distances to the workplace the situation requires the utmost delicacy. Different groups simply have to be placed together. It's a dimension of the game that is massively difficult to master but provides a welcome challenge nonetheless. Of course it also raises the whole moral issue of segregation and class-separation. A fact not ignored by the publishers. By providing the broader term of 'subculture' for these blatant socio-economic driven groups, they have tried to alleviate any lingering negative connotations. In addition the manual declares somewhat comically and in bold lettering: These categories may seem like a caricature and they are! City Life is a game!

For the most part they're right. After all groups are not forever locked into their specific 'subculture' status as advancement into superior communities is entirely possible. Initially a city comprises only of the working class groups. When more services and business opportunities arise it suddenly becomes more attractive to the wealthier sector. They, in turn, provide mentorship to the educated working class, who benefit from the strategic placement of schools and universities. Thus over a few generations it is perfectly plausible for a blue collar family to up-sticks and relocate on the wealthier side of town.

Mention must also be made of the excellent first-person views available in the game. Apart from the standard top-down 'God' view it is possible to zoom right into events. The detail is outstanding and it is genuinely interesting to witness proceedings from the same perspective as your residents. The difference between the Have Nots' smoky ghettos and the Elites' elegant apartments is yet further exacerbated with this feature.

One of the main qualities of the game is that it is supremely challenging. Keeping residents happy while avoiding economic disaster isn't easy although each map provides a variety of intricacy via its bronze, silver and gold challenges. Despite each setting having its own testing criteria to fulfil there has, in truth, been little imagination on the part of developer and publisher. Population and financial targets are all well and good initially but tend to get a bit boring. Players will consistently have to build a city from scratch for each new scenario. This soon becomes procession instead of progression, at least in the early stages of city development. More variety could have been



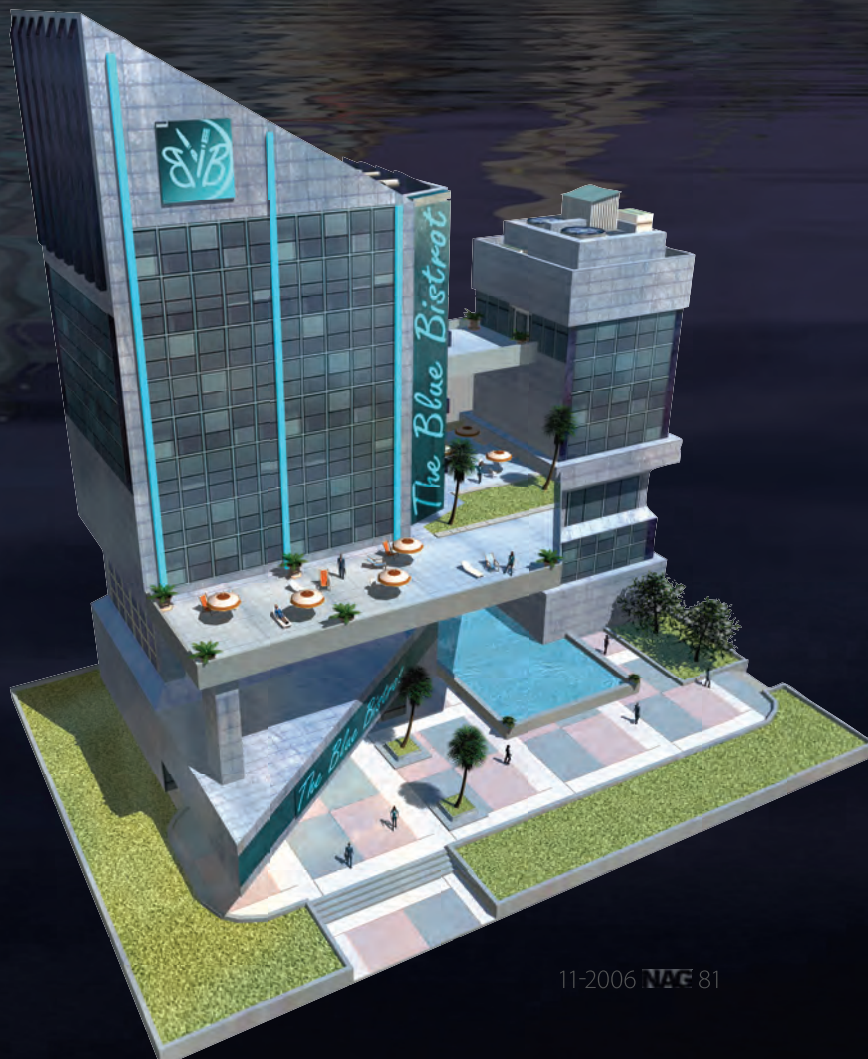


added for the player such as turning a working class city into an elitist one or even pacifying a city in the throes of civil-war meltdown.

Another disappointing factor is that the game seems to have been rushed out and lacks polish. This is most noticeable in the substandard quality of music as well as the games tooltips which still contain remnants of unlocalised French text. Finally the lack of a decent tutorial is criminal especially with the complex factors that govern gameplay. The current tutorial is a ten point introduction which is non-interactive and fairly useless. The player is thrown in at the deep end which can be tough for a city sim newbie.

Nevertheless the game has revitalised the genre with its socio-economic element as well as the introduction of the superb first-person camera. Factor in the incessant challenge that the title provides and it's clear that City Life is a winner.

The review begins introducing the basic 'selling-point' of the game: the subculture issue and the segregation it requires. Further to this a general explanation of gameplay is explained from settlement to businesses to services. The socio-economic factor is then further explained and the friction that may result from two polar opposites in close proximity if a careful eye is not kept on both. The review then explains why use of segregation is not as easy as it sounds as the services each group require invariably need workers who are not of that socio-economic group. Advancement of groups is then explained followed by the good and bad points of the challenge of City Life. Finally, a lack of polish and some irritating issues are commented upon before the review concludes. **NAG**





## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R493

### Developer

Volition

### Publisher

THQ

### Supplier

Mi Digital (011) 723-1967

### Genre

Action

### Age Restriction

18+

### Specifications

Online: Yes

Players: 1

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## BOTTOM LINE

Feshizzle Nizzle, this game is wack yo! Take GTA, mix in some 'gangsta' flavour and the end result is one of the most enjoyable games on the Xbox 360 today. It might not live up to GTA: San Andreas, but it's superb in its own right.

**90/100**

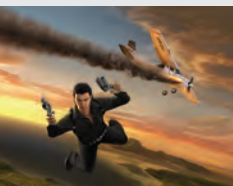
Joining a real gang and spending time in jail

BETTER THAN



Just Cause

WORSE THAN



# SAINTS ROW

THE FIRST TIME YOU load up *Saints Row* it's kind of obvious why this game is referred to as a GTA clone. Everything about it screams *GTA* but that is not a bad thing, far from it. *GTA* is undoubtedly one of the most popular game franchises around and seeing another developer take its own spin on this proven formula (and improving on it in many ways) is kind of exciting. *Saints Row* is set against the backdrop of a typical American city called Stilwater in which four rival gangs control the city streets.

Before you start the game, you are prompted to create your character. Virtually every aspect of your character is customisable, and while it might seem a little trivial to be able to do so, it's a nice feature nonetheless.

You start off the game being recruited by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Saints, the lowest ranked gang in Stilwater who wants to gain notoriety and eventually take over the city of Stilwater, eliminating the other gangs in the process. Your role is to gain street credit (respect) and help the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Saints gain more territory.

As with the *GTA* series of games *Saints Row*, is open ended allowing you to do virtually anything you want at any time. This includes hijacking vehicles, driving around, and spreading general mayhem. The missions you play are well structured and the developers were clever in developing a 'respect' system that prevents you from moving through the game too quickly. In order to unlock new missions you need to earn a certain amount of respect by doing any of the dozens of activities available throughout the city. You do not have to complete every single one, but just enough to raise your respect level.

The mission variety is rather interesting and range from Snatch (stealing ho's from other pimps), to drug trafficking, and our personal favourite insurance fraud. The latter requires you to throw yourself in front of oncoming traffic, the finesse in which you do so earns you more money.

Throughout the game you can further customise your character by buying new clothes or even going to the plastic surgeon for a facelift. A rather nice touch to the game is that you can even hold up a store by pointing a gun at the cashier, or if you don't like your plastic surgeon, you can do the same. Just don't let them out of your site or they will sound the alarm.

While the entire premise of *Saints Row* sounds clichéd the developers did an amazing job with the in-game physics, graphics, and the overall gameplay. The graphics are superb when playing in HD and we were equally blown away by the sound. An example of this is the sound of a car's audio system as it drives past. The sound is sort of muffled with the bass dominating it. As you get closer to said vehicle, the sound would become louder with the bass becoming even louder. When you finally get into the car, the sound becomes crystal clear, just as it should. Impressively this transition is seamless.

Another, less-hyped feature of *Saints Row* is its multiplayer capabilities. There are various game types available including co-op and deathmatch missions and you can play via system link or over Xbox Live.

Seasoned *GTA* players might criticise *Saints Row* for lacking certain features they are used to, but we think this game is the perfect time-filler until next year when *GTA IV* should be available. **NAG**





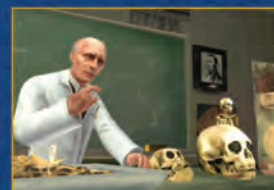


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PlayStation®2



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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R270

### Developer

Relic Entertainment

### Publisher

THQ

### Supplier

WWE [011] 462-0150

### Genre

RTS

### Age Restriction

18+

### Specifications

CPU: Pentium 4 2GHz

Video: 128MB Graphics card

RAM: 512MB RAM

HDD: 5.0GB HDD

CD/DVD: DVD-ROM

Players: 1-8

Internet: Not Required, but supported

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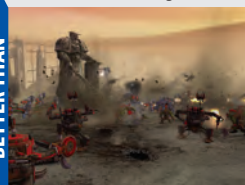
## BOTTOM LINE

Here is a game that takes an overused theme and runs far with it. From a technical standpoint, *Company of Heroes* is a gem, but it also offers many hours of enjoyment – highly recommended.

**81/100**

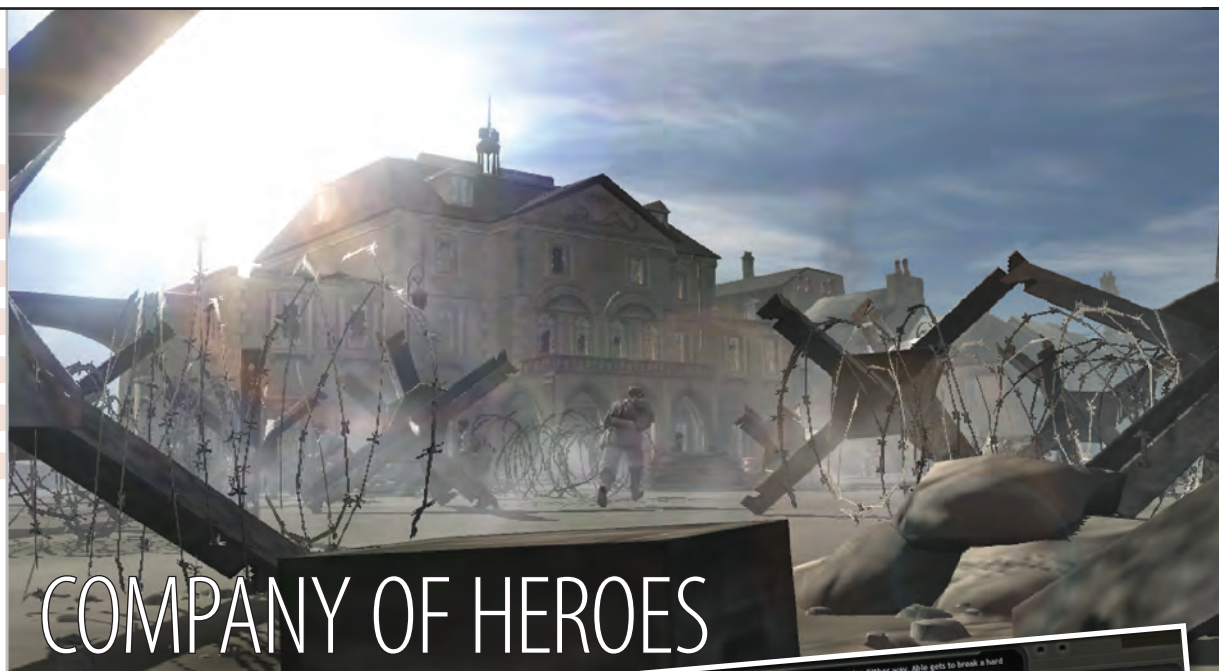
**Dawn of War, Blitzkrieg**

BETTER THAN



**C&C Generals Zero Hour**

WORSE THAN



# COMPANY OF HEROES

**R**ELIC ENTERTAINMENT IS WELL known for its previous successes, including the *Homeworld* series and *Warhammer 40000: Dawn of War*. Both of these franchises make use of science fiction settings, but their latest offering visits the theatres of World War II.

*Company of Heroes* chronicles the exploits of Able Company, the story starting with the Normandy landings. Engine-rendered cut-scenes present the plot, which is surprisingly rich for that of a war story. The soundtrack that accompanies this is exactly what one might expect, with the added touch of multilingual voiceovers. As far as the speech is concerned, this is where this game earns much of its 18+ rating – the soldiers swear like, well, soldiers. This is actually very welcome, as it lends this game a certain level of realism that would have been lacking had the speech been toned down.

It seems that realism has been something of a goal for Relic as far as this game's development was concerned. This is evident in the game engine's ability to track an almost fully destructible environment. Buildings, fences, walls and just about any other feature can sustain damage, with certain weapons, such as small arms, having little or no effect, while others, such as artillery and cannons, are able to demolish just about anything. Terrain features can also be used by troops for cover, but given that such cover can be blown away, this may or may not be a permanent convenience! Buildings, in particular, are spectacularly detailed as bits of them get blown away, with parts of the interior showing through.

The concept of troops making use of cover is not merely one of physics modelling. Units' AI also takes cover into account, and

this manifests when a group of infantry is given a move order – individual soldiers will weave from hedgerow to tree to wall to whatever cover is available as they dash to their destination. The overall effect is one of believability, as well as resulting in lower casualties.

*Company of Heroes* borrows successful concepts from other games. For example, the resource model is quite reminiscent of *Dawn of War*, whereby resources are accumulated by holding strategic locations. Three resources are available: manpower, munitions and fuel. Manpower is required for just about everything you requisition, and is gathered by controlling strategic points and territorial sectors. Munitions are collected by controlling munitions dumps, and are used for most upgrades

and weapons. Finally, fuel is required for the construction of many buildings, vehicles like tanks and certain upgrades, and comes from fuel depots. There are alternative ways to gain resources, which are acquired by earning experience and allocating points to specific abilities. This latter aspect is another idea that has been adopted from another game, *Command & Conquer: Generals: Zero Hour*, to be specific. Players choose one of three specialisations (for example, Allies have infantry and airborne options, while among the available specialisations for Axis is blitzkrieg). Thereafter, as players earn





The game tends to be fairly dynamic, as it is usually impossible to maintain a garrison at each sector in order to maintain control, and even building defensive emplacements at each becomes prohibitively expensive, as resources generally trickle in quite slowly. Therefore, sectors change hands often. It is vital to keep permanent control of the sectors closest to one's



This game's overall presentation is slick and polished. The graphics are nothing short of astounding, the units are quite realistically modelled without sacrificing playability, the sound effects are rich and atmospheric, with the soldiers' constant chatter and banter serving to immerse players in a believable experience. The single-player campaign is far more interesting than is often the case. Lastly, it offers a decent level of challenge, so players are unlikely to get bored easily or quickly. **NAG**

**NAG**

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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R439

### Developer

Sony

### Publisher

Sony

### Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games [011] 445-7960

### Genre

Action adventure

### Age Restriction

18+

### Specifications

Wireless: Yes

Players: 1-2

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## BOTTOM LINE

Gangs of London offers a variety of game play styles to suit diverse tastes. At its core, however, this is a tactical action game with an emphasis on gunplay. We can heartily recommend this title to most players. Beware: can consume many hours!

**82/100**

### Miami Vice



### GTA: Vice City Sto



# GANGS OF LONDON

**O** I SAY, OL' CHAP, this be quite a peculiar game, innit! The publishers and distributors have labelled this as an "action adventure" title, but *Gangs of London* offers rather a hybrid experience. The main game modes are quite reminiscent of *Grand Theft Auto* – and then again, not. Yes, there is some driving around to be done, and nefarious activities to engage in, but the nature of the action is substantially more varied.

The back-story is rather thin, and doesn't really need to offer anything more, as the game is, ultimately, about gang warfare in modern-day London. Several playable gangs can be chosen from, and each has its own unique flavour. These range from common street thugs, to Russian mafia members to highly organised and legitimate-appearing corporates. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and each offers certain attributes to a player's vehicles, such as differing levels of speed, handling and toughness. Gang members' attributes are also influenced by their allegiance.

The story mode is where most players will want to start. This presents a campaign for each of the playable factions, with the story being presented by means of a combination of comic-book-style stills and rendered scenes. Players will undertake specific missions on behalf of their masters in order to further their gang's agenda. These campaigns are quite long, and are fairly challenging right off the bat. In fact, players are pretty much dropped in the deep end, which is not so good for people who want an easy-to-pick-up title to quickly while some time away without investing much time or energy, but great in terms of replayability. Bottom line: if you want to spend some money on a title that you will need to spend some time learning, and which will keep you busy for a while, buy this; if not, stay away!

The actual game mechanic cannot be simply described, as there are so many elements involved, but we can outline the dominant ones. Firstly, there is the driving. This is usually a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, and usually takes place on the way to a job, or during the getaway. One gang member drives the vehicle, while passengers open fire if needed. Arguably the most interesting (and certainly the most intense) aspect of this game is combat. Unlike similar titles, this one allows you to control a 'squad' (gang, really), with one character being the focus of control while the others follow orders from an easy-to-use tactical command menu. Players can also switch from one gang member to another on the fly, to take advantage of different weapons. Players can run and gun,



or slow down to take more careful aim. In order to succeed, a combination of both approaches is generally required. Between jobs, players make decisions about bolstering their gang's numbers, and buying weapons and special events ("cards").

There are several other game modes available. The free-roaming game allows people to play in a sandbox, as it were, much like *Grand Theft Auto*. This mode uses all of the above elements, but players are not restricted to following a sequence of missions. This results in greater customisability and replayability, at the cost of the storyline. Another mode allows players to focus on the strategic aspects of the game. Here London is divided into territories, somewhat like *Risk*, with headquarters for each gang. The aim is to take over a predetermined number of rival gangs' headquarters. This game mode is surprisingly engaging, considering that it is, at the end of the day, turn-based strategy.

Lastly, if looking for a brief diversion, particularly with a friend (but only requiring one PSP), players can play pub-themed mini-games. These include pool, darts, skittles and an arcade version of *Snake*.

In every aspect, this game's graphics are very good indeed, and the sounds and speech set the tone very well. The soundtrack itself is excellent, and appropriate. Overall, this game offers much even at its high price, and is likely to appeal to several types of gamers – expect to have your friends wanting to borrow your PSP to play this one! **NAG**



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- External speaker (2W x 2), optional
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## F191L

- 19" LCD Monitor
- Pixel Pitch: 0.294mm
- Brightness: 250 cd/m<sup>2</sup>
- Response time: 8ms (Tr+Tf)
- Contrast ratio: 600:1
- VESA Wall Mounting
- Integrated speaker 2W\*2
- Max Resolution: 1280 x 1024@75Hz



## F172L

- 17" LCD Monitor
- Pixel Pitch: 0.264mm
- Brightness: 300 cd/m<sup>2</sup>
- Response time: 8ms (Tr+Tf)
- Contrast ratio: 500:1
- Max Resolution: 1280 x 1024@75Hz

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## DSW1685L

- Interface: E-IDE/ATAPI
- Average Access Time: 160ms
- Data Buffer Memory: 2MB
- Loading Mechanism: Tray Type
- Speed: 16X DVD+R/DVD-R and 8X DVD+R DL and DVD-R DL writing speed
- 5X DVD-RAM





## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R479

### Developer

Namco

### Publisher

Namco

### Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games (011) 445-7960

### Genre

Fighting

### Age Restriction

12+

### Specifications

Players: 1 - 2

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## BOTTOM LINE

This is a worthy heir to the hallowed Tekken mantle. A version of this game that can be played anywhere, without requiring a permanent setup including a TV, is actually rather dangerous, as fans will find this game highly addictive.

**83/100**

### Dead or Alive



### Playing with 4 shoulder buttons



# TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

SOME GAMING FRANCHISES JUST don't seem to ever end. For fans, this is great, as old favourites keep getting revisited on successive generations of technology. This is the case with *Tekken Dark Resurrection*. This series has been going strong for years, being ported from coin-operated arcade machines to whichever of Sony's PlayStation was available at the time. *Tekken 3* was eminently memorable on the original PlayStation, and is likely responsible for many players latching onto this series. Since then, various iterations have been introduced, all of which have been consistent with previous versions. Some may see this as a downside, as it implies a certain lack of originality and innovation. However, if you're looking for a game that feels like its predecessors but takes advantage of a more advanced platform, keeping up with the series is not a terrible idea.

*Dark Resurrection* brings this timeless classic to the mobile generation. Fans can now enjoy this great fighting game wherever they may be, with the only downside being that if you want to play against a live opponent, you need two PSPs – and two copies of the game. From a graphical point of view, this game delights, and manages to match the appeal of its recent predecessors on the PlayStation 2. Granted, this is likely at least partially due to the fact that the screen is small, so pixelation is not noticeable, but nevertheless the graphics have been masterfully executed. The sound accompaniment is typically *Tekken* – “Get ready for the next battle!” Nothing spectacular here – just exactly what we expect.

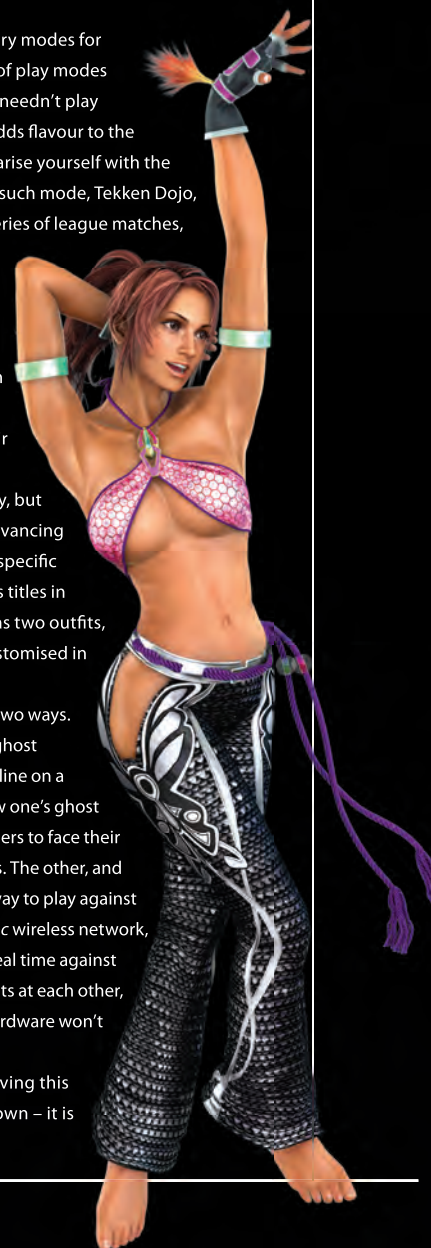
*Tekken* veterans will find the available characters familiar – with two exceptions. The new characters are Sergei Dragunov, a former Russian special forces commando, and Lilly, a spoiled rich girl with some bee in her bonnet and fantastic moves. The various characters' moves are also largely unchanged, though their timing is infinitesimally different. This is actually not a problem at all, as players need a couple of hours to adjust to the different feel of the PSP instead of a controller in their hands. Furthermore, the fact that the PSP has only two shoulder buttons, as opposed to the quartet found on a PS or PS2 controller, means that players who rely on these buttons will have their repertoire of available moves slightly curtailed. This cannot be avoided, of course – it's merely a limitation of the

platform, and not the game.

The game offers short story modes for all characters, and a variety of play modes thereafter. (Technically, you needn't play the story mode first, but it adds flavour to the experience if you first familiarise yourself with the character's back story.) One such mode, *Tekken Dojo*, presents the player with a series of league matches, tournaments and challenge battles, each tougher than the last. Players are rewarded for their progress by earning a currency, which can be spent on various visual customisations to their characters. Some of these cannot be bought right away, but must first be unlocked by advancing far enough, or by defeating specific opponents. As with previous titles in this series, each character has two outfits, and each of these can be customised in this fashion.

Multiplayer is handled in two ways. Firstly, one can play against ghost characters that are stored online on a server. A player can also allow one's ghost to be uploaded, allowing others to face their digitally emulated play styles. The other, and ultimately more enjoyable, way to play against someone else is via the *ad hoc* wireless network, which allows you to play in real time against someone else (and fling taunts at each other, perhaps – though the PSP hardware won't help you with that!)

Several weeks after receiving this game, we still can't put it down – it is simply excellent! **NAG**





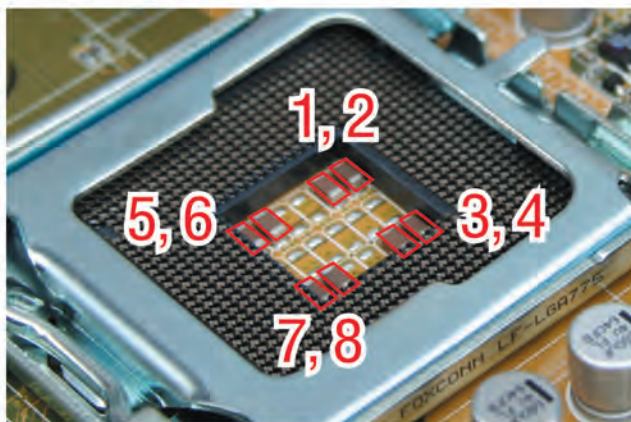
**Hot Stuff !**

# Simply The Stable!!

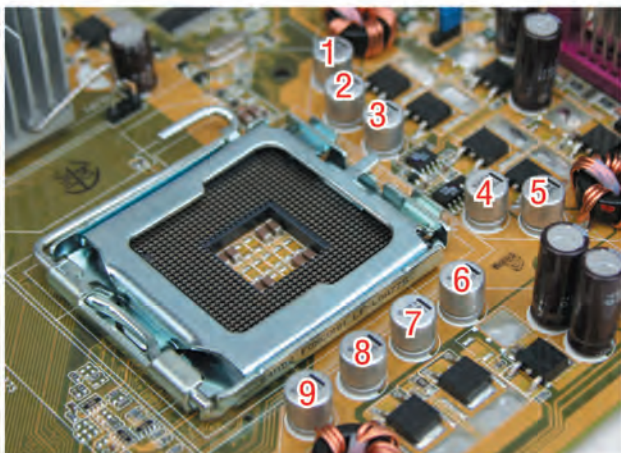
## Asus P5B Packs Excellent Innovations that Have Never Been Done On Competing P965 Motherboards

*The ASUS P5B packs some excellent innovations that have never been done on competing P965 motherboards. Let us take a look at some of these exclusive features, which caters to the number one concern for PC systems. That's right, it's stability.*

*Looking at the board layout, it's apparent that ASUS spared no expense and effort in creating this cost-effective yet high-quality solution. The P5B is one of the very few P965 boards that incorporated eight MLCC (multi-layer ceramic chip) caps in the CPU socket, while most still uses only four. The more capacitors to share the load, the better the signal quality, which translates to enhanced CPU performance and operation reliability.*



P5B incorporated 8 MLCC caps share the load for better signal quality .



Higher uf value and caps are always good for system stability .

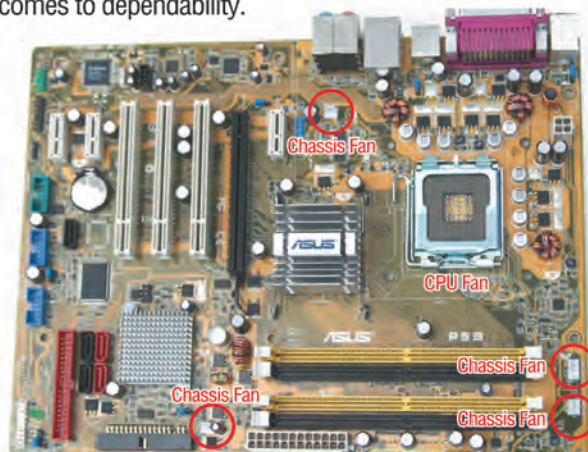
While many motherboard makers are using 560uf Vcore caps, the P5B adopted 680uf caps, and the cool thing is that the board has nine of those. Higher uf value means that the cap can handle higher voltage, and of course, more caps to share the work load are always good for system stability.



Advanced SMT provide better performance for high-frequency parts .

The P5B is produced through the advanced SMT (surface mount technology). Compared to DIP (dual in-line package) technology, SMT enables lower lead resistance and inductance, providing better performance for high-frequency parts. It also leads to more reliable performance under shake and vibration conditions.

Any computer user should know that heat is the top enemy for system stability. With expertise in electrical circuit layout, superior quality parts (caps) and four fan connectors, PCs based on the P5B have been tested and proven to function at 12°C lower than those with competing boards. 12°C can be the difference between night and day when it comes to dependability.



P5B have been tested and proven to function at 12 C lower than those with competing boards

Overall, the P5B is quite an impressive offering from the world's leading motherboard maker. At an affordable price, the P5B still threw in high-quality materials and parts to ensure stability. If you are on the market for a high-performance and high-value P965 board, look no further than the ASUS P5B.



## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R265

### Developer

Akella

### Publisher

Playlogic

### Supplier

Megarom [011] 234-2680

### Genre

Mixed

### Age Restriction

3+

### Specifications

CPU: Pentium 4 1.8GHz

Video: 128MB Video

RAM: 256MB RAM

HDD: 4.0GB HDD

CD/DVD: CD/DVD-ROM

Players: 1 - 16

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## BOTTOM LINE

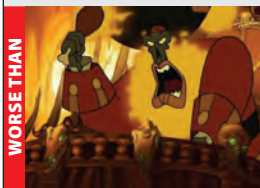
It's an open-ended RPG / Strategy / Action game whose sum is disappointingly somewhat less than its parts, but you do get to be a pirate, and do all sorts of appropriately rascally stuff. And that's always a grand thing. Yo hos and bottles o' rum sold separately.

**60/100**

Anything with ninjas



Anything with zombie pirates



# AGE OF PIRATES: CARIBBEAN TALES

**D**IG THOSE STUFFED PARROTS out of their mothballs and pilfer your grannies' flintlock pistol replicas, ye rotgut-toting scallywags - 'tis time to batten those flapping hatches, shiver those unwary timbers, and conquer the Caribbean!

*Age of Pirates*, like any true seafaring rapsallion, has some rather convoluted ancestry. The scuttlebutt has it that it's the unofficial (obviously) and unlicensed (obviously) sequel to 2003's *Pirates of the Caribbean* rather tenuous game-of-the-film, itself the unofficial (obviously) sequel to 2000's *Sea Dogs*. So if you've played either of those, expect more of the same, but with swankier graphics and an ocean engine that'll have you clinging to the rigging in slack-jawed awe. If not, expect to swagger about town scrounging work, swagger around your ship's deck looking dapper and piratey, swagger around the Caribbean blowing stuff up and killing people, and - if you're an especially accomplished scourge o' the seas - swagger around your very own colonies.

The RPG model is quite basic. Your character, as well as any hired officers, gain experience and level up, receiving points to plug into an ability and perk system that's very reminiscent of the *Fallout* series. Invest a few points in the Navigation skill, for example, and your ship cuts a nipper swathe through the high seas; nab the Musketeer perk, and your boarding party brutes will obligingly add pistols to their personal arsenals. As you attain higher levels, you can purchase or commandeer bigger and better ships, as well as augment your squadron by appointing your officers ships of their own.

While you could trot around town, jawing with the natives, haggling for bananas, or admiring the architecture, you'll probably spend most of your time cruising the 17th century Caribbean archipelago. Although there is some scant evidence

of a storyline, most of the game involves running errands for colonial governors (if you've opted to sell out and enter the service of The Man) or trawling the waters for hapless prey - and their stuff - under the glorious Jolly Roger (if ye be a lawless varlet). Either way, you'll find yourself gleefully flinging grapeshot and cannonballs at everything from puny two-masted luggers to colossal frigates bristling with formidable munitions, accompanied by a suitably rousing and swashbuckling soundtrack as you send your vexed opponents flailing headlong down to Davy Jones's fabled locker. As you complete more missions and / or pillage the parrots out of every ship you trounce on the seas, you'll find your coffers overflowing with gold just begging to be squandered at your nearest shipyard on making your beloved tub that much more fearsome.

The graphics in this game are quite something to behold. The character models and town environments are fairly standard (occasionally marred by low-res ground textures), but you've never seen real-time rendered water like that served up by Akella's proprietary STORM engine - from sun-kissed placid harbour wavelets to the storm-whipped roiling behemoths of the open seas. The engine also eschews the omnipresent pastel cloud-streaked sky in favour of an atmosphere dynamically-generated to reflect the time of day and prevailing weather conditions.

Overall, *Age of Pirates* isn't quite as satisfying as one might reasonably imagine. The RPG element is lacking somewhat, and the melee combat is about as sophisticated as a toddler in a room of Smuggle Bunnies. That said, however, there's something oddly addictive about this game, and you're quite likely to find yourself muttering, "Yarrrrr, just one more rumble before bedtime." For a week or so, anyway. **NAG**





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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R299

### Developer

Plastic Reality Technology

### Publisher

Ascaron

### Supplier

Megarom [011] 234-2680

### Genre

Action

### Age Restriction

16+

### Specifications

CPU: Pentium 4 3.0GHz

Video: 256MB Graphics Card

RAM: 1,024MB RAM

HDD: 2.5GB HDD

CD/DVD: DVD-ROM

Internet: Not Required

Players: 1

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"It's just a game, Max! It's just a game!"

## EL MATADOR

WITH A FANCY NICKNAME such as *El Matador*, it's no wonder that the lead DEA special agent protagonist can leap around in bullet-time. Cool nicknames are everything: just ask Neo.

In terms of plotline, *El Matador* is generic. Some new narcotics cartel is rising across Central and South America and it's your job to infiltrate and put an end to the whole thing. Basically, you're a one-man army who is above and beyond the law. "Ultimate justice", the back of the box lets you know.

The game itself spans across multiple settings: jungles, harbours, mansions, city streets and such, each one pleasantly detailed. The only thing lacking is a cohesive whole between the settings themselves. *Max Payne* (the obvious inspiration to *El Matador*) strung its locales together using (cheesy) noir story and exposition, something *El Matador* doesn't really try. If anything, *El Matador* is 99% action and 1% plot, not that there's anything wrong with that. *El Matador* does its action right, making each scene explosive and tense. The terseness of each scene is mostly due to the sheer difficulty of the game. Bad guys have excellent aim and your own team-members, who occasionally appear, are next to useless. In fact, they seem to be good at one thing and one thing only: getting in your way just as you fire an explosive round.

*El Matador* is the type of game that is enjoyable, but doesn't really leave any kind of lasting impression. The characters are flat, the plot is shallow, and while the action is *Max Payne*-licious, it just doesn't ever break out of its tribute box. This leads to a few hours of fun, but after a while one starts to question the full-price commitment and the overwhelming feeling of 'been there, done that' starts to set in. This is compounded by how the lead character looks like *Max Payne*, moves like *Max Payne*, the menus are exactly like *Max Payne*'s and the weapons are all standard *Max Payne* gunplay. If anything, *El Matador* might as well be a modification of *Max Payne*. **NAG**

## BOTTOM LINE

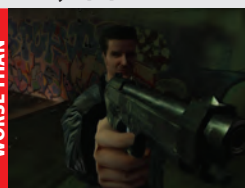
*El Matador* takes much inspiration from *Max Payne* in the action department, but neglected everything else.

**67/100**

### Advent Rising [PC]



### Max Payne [PC]





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## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Suggested Retail Price

R399

## ■ Developer

Broadsword

## ■ Publisher

Codemasters

## ■ Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games [011] 445-7960

## ■ Genre

Music

## ■ Age Restriction

3+

## ■ Specifications

Online: No

Controllers: 1

Players: 1-2

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## BOTTOM LINE

Dance mat games are a dime a dozen these days, but *Dance Factory* manages to be somebody.

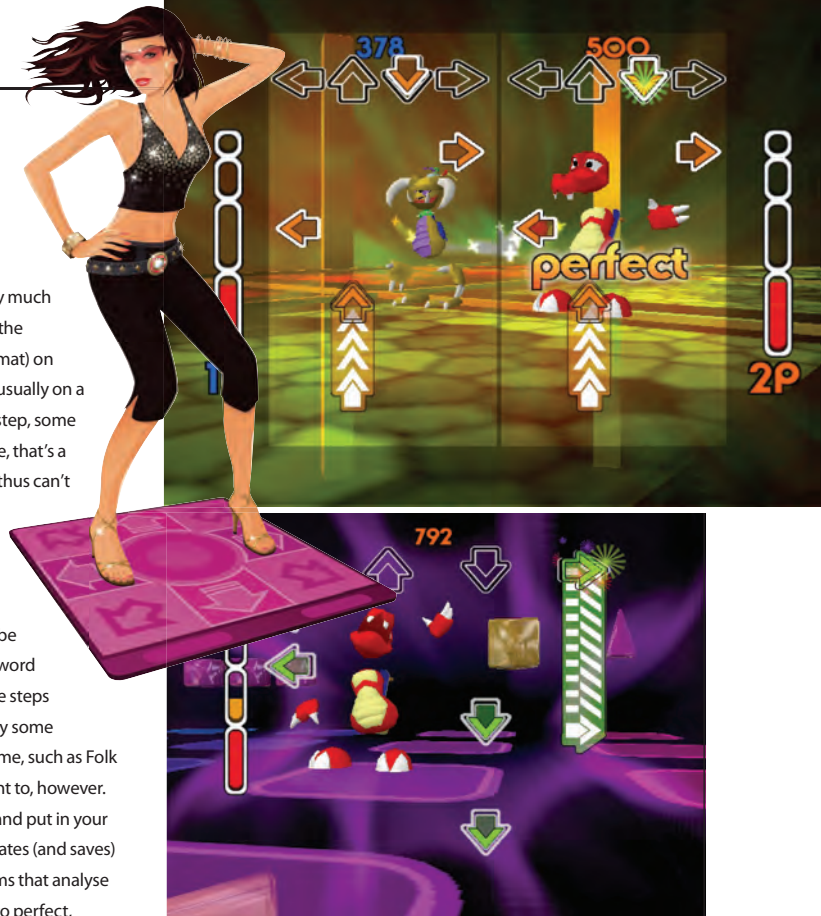
80/100

## DANCE FACTORY

ESSENTIALLY THE FORMULA FOR a dancing game is pretty much rock-solid: arrows scroll up from the bottom of the screen and the player has to step (if using a dance mat) on the corresponding arrow when it reaches the top, usually on a beat. Some arrows require the player to 'hold' the step, some arrows require quick foot movement. On the whole, that's a dancing game. Each new iteration of such a game thus can't add much other than licensing more music to dance to, or perhaps a weight-loss mode.

*Dance Factory* does have a weight-loss mode, but the real feather in its cap is that it can use any music CD. Instead of licensing tons of music that'll be out of date and boring in a month anyway, Broadsword opted instead to have *Dance Factory* auto-generate steps for almost any CD. We say almost, because naturally some music genres are not really suited for a dancing game, such as Folk Yodeling or Death metal. You can still try if you want to, however.

Once loaded, you eject the *Dance Factory* disc and put in your own standard music CD. *Dance Factory* then generates (and saves) steps for the music, based on some fancy algorithms that analyse the music. The end result ranges from acceptable to perfect, depending on how strong the beat is. Additionally, the game can also generate a kind of 'creature' based on the music CD's unique characteristics, and these creatures can be used during a VS battle where two players square off - certain abilities can be used during



play to throw off the other player, depending on the creature being used.

For what it does, *Dance Factory* is the perfect title for anyone who loves dancing games. **NAG**

## VITAL INFO

## ■ Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

## ■ Suggested Retail Price

R399

## ■ Developer

EA Games

## ■ Publisher

Electronic Arts

## ■ Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516-8300

## ■ Genre

Fighting

## ■ Age Restriction

18+

## ■ Specifications

Memory: 100KB

Wireless: Yes

Game Sharing: No

Online: No

Players: 1-2

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## BOTTOM LINE

The *Def Jam* series goes from strength to strength with each new release - *The Takeover* is no different.

89/100

## DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY: THE TAKEOVER

OFTEN OVERLOOKED DUE TO its hip-hop centric theme and content, the *Def Jam* series has actually always been a quality, visceral fighting experience. *Def Jam Fight for NY* added much-needed depth to the series and now, *The Takeover* brings the series to the PSP. *The Takeover* is the prequel to *Fight for NY*, explaining how the D-Mob rose to control New York City. The story is entirely new and contains four new venues and a host of new moves. It's impressive how much content is in *The Takeover* - the sheer amount of moves, characters and music on the UMD is surprising.

The core of *Def Jam* is the fighting system, an easy to learn but very hard to master grouping of martial arts, wrestling, submission fighting, kickboxing and street fighting. As you play through the career mode, you can learn and combine these styles to create other styles - wrestling, martial arts and kickboxing will give your character a Tae Kwon Do fighting style, for example. You can learn new moves and spent points to upgrade the speed, stamina or strength of your character. A staple to *Def Jam*, the interactive environments are intact on the PSP complete with crowds who can grab you as you fight, making them a dangerous element in any battle.

*The Takeover* lets you create your own fighter from the ground up with all the expected bling, licensed gear and so forth. From there, you rise up through the plot (told, using interesting comic-book style art) to unlock more fighters and earn money. You can fight wireless against one opponent, though both players need to own the

game. Gameshare would have worked well for *The Takeover*, but is absent.

Subject matter aside, *The Takeover* is a solid, strong fighter for the PSP that places much more emphasis on position and on-your-feet thinking than other more traditional fighting games such as *Tekken*. If anything, *The Takeover* is comparable to *Rumble Roses XX* in terms of how they approach the genre. Fans of the series won't be disappointed by this PSP incarnation. **NAG**





## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R439

### Developer

Ahead

### Publisher

SCEI

### Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games [011] 445-7960

### Genre

Stealth

### Age Restriction

16+

### Specifications

Controllers: 1

Players: 1

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# SHINOBIDO: WAY OF THE NINJA

THE TENCHU SERIES WAS brought to the world by Ahead, but after the first two games, development honours went to other teams close to Sega. Since then Ahead has not dabbled back into the genre and stealthy ninja action has remained the domain of the Tenchu games. Now the creators of the series are back with the same concept, but under a different name and in a new jacket.

As the master assassin Crow, players wake up next to a river with Crow's memory gone. But guidance quickly comes in the form of letters from a 'concerned bystander' and Crow learns that to restore his memory and soul, he needs to recover pieces of a gem scattered over the game world. The people who can help him find this gem are the three warlords in *Shinobido's* setting of feudal Japan; each, though, need to respect Crow to support him. Respect and are earned by doing jobs for the three factions, all chosen from the hub location of Crow's hut. Doing missions affect his reputation, which can make things easier or harder for him – if a warlord has zero respect for the ninja, his life will be a lot harder.

The missions vary in difficulty and payoff, but they aren't that varied. Invariable Crow is either moving a package, stealing something or killing someone. But the more core aspect of the game is stealth. Crow is an accomplished fighter, but hardly a match against a mob of armed swordsmen. Instead, he stalks over rooftops and across walls, waiting for the right opportunity to strike. So manoeuvring around the map and avoiding guards or killing them is the test at hand. In the end, the objectives for missions are not that important, instead it's about how you play the game. Crow has a lot of weapons and means of distraction he can buy from local vendors. None of these are essential to master to play the game, but they add variety on how to approach missions. Generally this aspect of *Shinobido* stands well and makes the game fun. As such, level repetition and the average graphics are not really big negatives if you want a good stealth experience.

The control system is not that easy to disregard, though, neither is the feathery feeling of the movement and acrobatics. Despite being a ninja, Crow takes a bit of doing to really be agile, especially when being chased by angry groups of guards. The acrobatic elements are not that refined either and definitely a far cry from *Prince of Persia* or *Splinter Cell*. It doesn't ruin the game, but *Shinobido* could have been much more than it is. **NAG**

## BOTTOM LINE

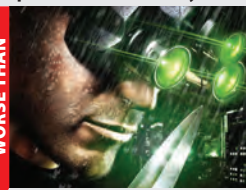
Tenchu fans will enjoy it, but *Shinobido* lacks more presence and refinement.

**65/100**

Tenchu: Fatal Shadows



Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory



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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms

Reviewed on PC

PC	PS2	PS3	PSP
XBOX	360	DS	MOB

### Suggested Retail Price

R299

### Developer

Volatile Games

### Publisher

Eidos

### Supplier

WWE [011] 462-0150

### Genre

Action

### Age Restriction

18+

### Specifications

CPU: 1.2GHz

Video: 64MB

RAM: 512MB

HDD: 2GB

CD/DVD: 4x

Internet: Not required

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## BOTTOM LINE

Another poor port of a promising title

**65/100**

# RESERVOIR DOGS

**M**R PINK, BROWN, BLONDE, Blue, Orange and White are all back on the job again, in a game that recounts the events behind Quentin Tarantino's epic *Reservoir Dogs*. The game is surprisingly solid, as praised in our last issue. Unfortunately, it's not entirely as solid on the PC. The most obvious problem is that it is a stone-cold port, so a lot of functionality inherent to PC games simply isn't here. The first giveaway is perhaps that you can't use a mouse to navigate the menu, but it's more than that. Using the mouse control, hostage control is simply too sluggish and the gun-fights and hostage situations lose a lot of their energy, dragged down by tedium.

For a slow-paced game, these drawbacks just make it sluggish. The graphics are lacking as well. On the PS2 they weren't better, but the PC version betrays the age of the PS2 hardware. It simply looks average. Still, that's not a major detractor. In fact, if you plan to go running around gunning down opponents and not explore the game's finer nuances, it still works well. It just doesn't show you why the PS2 title is a fun game. **NAG**

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## 1500 WAYS TO DIE

Because the system is persistent, awards and unlocks are tied into your rank and, crucially, they're now immediate, so once you pick an item you're then able to use it the very next respawn. Speaking of rank, the new Supreme Commander position will now highlight one player as the best in the world. Visit [www.battlefield.ea.com](http://www.battlefield.ea.com) to find out if you have a shot at the title.



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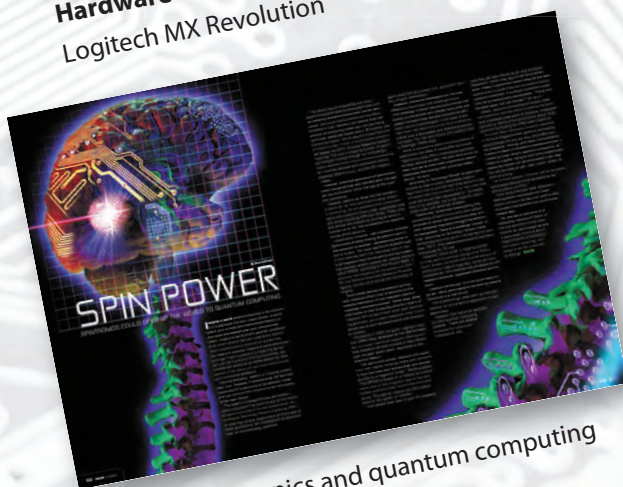
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**Versus:** 2.1 speaker systems go head-to-head



**Feature:** Spintronics and quantum computing



**Hands-on how to:** A step-by-step tutorial on how to secure a wireless network



July 2006

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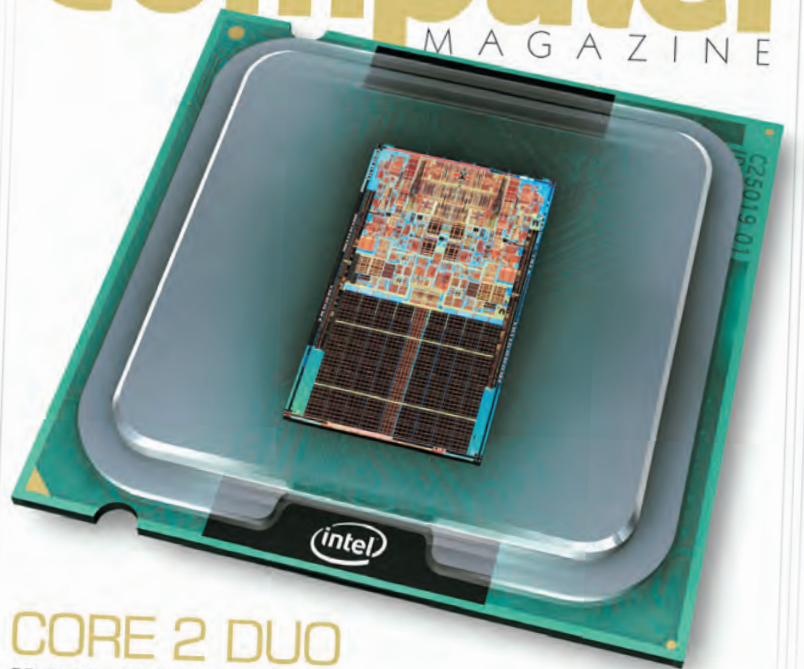
## Highlights this month

Boot Camp Public Beta 1.1.1 | iTunes 7  
Nero 7 Ultra Edition ENHANCED Trial Version  
Nero PhotoShow Express 4 | Windows Live Mail Desktop  
Beta | Windows Live Messenger | Windows Live Writer

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# SA Computer MAGAZINE



## CORE 2 DUO

DOUBLE THE PROCESSING POWER.  
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THIS CHIP KICKS SERIOUS BUTT

### GROUP TEST

Seven webcams are  
under the spotlight  
in this month's  
group test.



**HARDWARE:** HP Pavilion dv5000 • Zen Vision W  
Logitech MX Revolution • VideoMate S350  
Acer d150 Portable Navigator • Apple MacBook

**SOFTWARE:** Windows Live • Webroot SpySweeper

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# HARDWARE

## GIGABYTE 6 QUAD SET TO IMPRESS

**G**IGABYTE HAS A NEW campaign sporting the power of six in its 6 Quad motherboards.

That means Quad Bios, Quad DDR2, Quad Core ready, Quad Cooling and Quad eSata. All of this promises the highest levels of performance and stability for the end-user more specifically the gamer and enthusiast markets. A number of Gigabyte products will feature the power of 6, including its latest GA-965P-DQ6, and this should continue into Gigabyte high-end motherboards for some time to come.

"Gigabyte has taken into account what people ask for and what people need when it comes to performance mainboards, and they have more than delivered with the 6 Quad Series," says Michael Hann, Business Manager at Rectron, the local distributor of Gigabyte hardware solutions.

A highlight, which should be appreciated by

enthusiast all over, is the 12-phase power circuit that is of the highest control out of all motherboards currently available to the consumer. This will ensure stability even at extreme levels of overclocking, where normal four to six phase circuitry fails.

"Gigabyte is providing the most stable platform possible with no equal and with the enthusiast in mind. This translates into peace of mind and high performance bundled in one fantastic package," concludes Hann.

[www.rectron.co.za](http://www.rectron.co.za)



## CREATIVE XMOD

Creative has announced its latest edition to the X-Fi® family, the Creative Xmod.

Based on the X-Fi® Xtreme Fidelity™ audio platform, Creative claims that it improves music playback quality for MP3, WMA, iTunes or AAC songs to beyond that of the original CD. The Creative Xmod is a small device about the size of a chocolate bar, sits between a set of stereo speakers or headphones, and either a PC, Mac, iPod, ZEN™ or any MP3 player. The Xmod is said to dramatically improve the listening experience by enhancing low and high frequencies, up-sampling the music during playback to high-quality 24-bit surround audio and improving audio dynamics for cleaner and richer signal, all resulting in sound quality surpassing the original audio CD.



## LOGITECH DINOVO EDGE

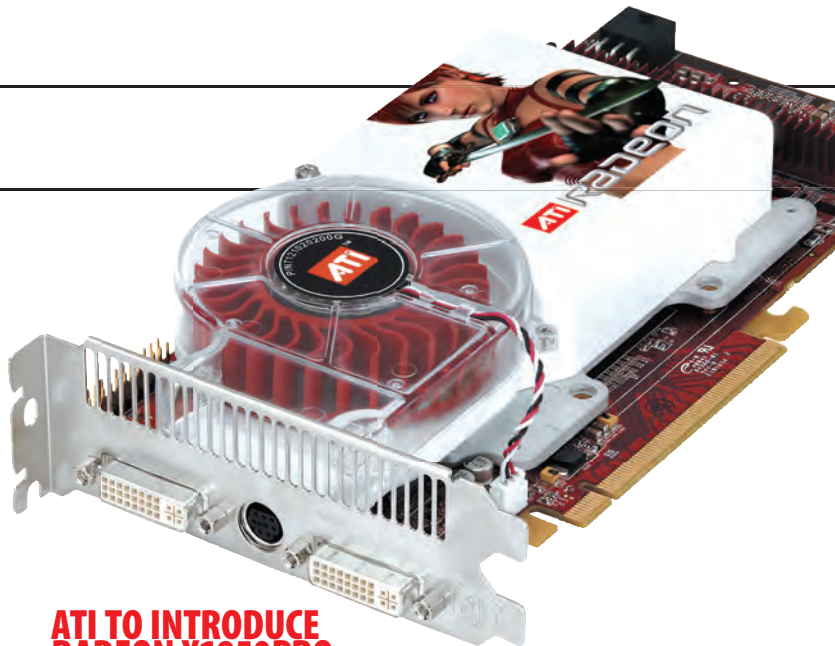
Logitech has introduced the successor to the acclaimed diNovo keyboard, with the diNovo Edge. It features a high-gloss finish, laser cut from a single, semi-translucent piece of black Plexiglas® and set into a brushed-aluminium frame. With an integrated touch sensitive navigation and scroll panel, the diNovo Edge includes embedded Bluetooth® wireless technology, a recharge facility for the keyboard, and an impossibly thin housing at only 19.05mm. On the face of the unit one finds a limited number of buttons and dynamic, backlit icons embedded within the keyboard that are invisible when not illuminated. The keyboard is sure to raise a few eyebrows as Logitech is calling it a "fusion of premium technology and aesthetics," sighting it as the most beautiful and elegant keyboard they have ever made.



## ANTEC NINE HUNDRED

Antec has released the Nine Hundred hardcore gaming cases, with the promise of "owning any noob ever spawned". The case sports a classic black finish, and is designed for high rates of air flow. It features a perforated front bezel, three 120mm fans with mounts for even more fans, and a monster top-mounted 200mm fan. The modular design lets you modify the placement of the front fans and hard drive cages. The case also features a tray on top for MP3 players, digital cameras and the like. The built-in fans have adjustable speeds, ranging from low to high and come in blue light schemes. The case also features a customisable hard drive mount that takes a maximum of six drives.





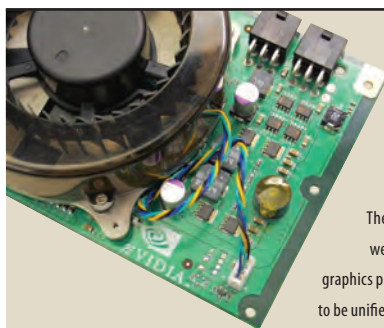
## ATI TO INTRODUCE RADEON X1950PRO

ATI will introduce its next X1900 class graphics processor dubbed the X1950Pro (RV570), similar in concept, but differing in fragment and texture pipeline count (36/12 vs. 48/16) to the range topping X1950XTX. The new graphics accelerator also features 256MB of GDDR3 RAM at 680MHz. Performance wise, the new accelerator matches the X1900XT 256MB edition, but comes in cheaper. Built on the new 80nm process, it draws less power than the X1900XT 256MB card. Local pricing is not available yet, but RRP is set at \$249, making it cheaper than the rival's recently released 7950GT 512MB part. This addition to the X1900 family brings class leading performance to the mainstream and is likely to become a favourite with budget conscious gamers and enthusiast alike.



## TRANSCEND 8GB

Transcend Information, Inc., a world leader in flash memory cards has announced its SDHC8G, 8GB high-capacity SDHC. Formatted in FAT32, the card is fully compatible with the SD2.0 standard, error correction, in system programming, mechanical write protection and a lifetime warranty. The unit is compatible with any SD2.0 compliant device, from PDAs to smartphones and media players. Perfect for moving large volumes of data with ease and storing a sizeable amount of media content for PDAs and other portable multimedia devices. The SD2.0 standard can scale up to 32GB of data and the Transcend SDHC8G is an indication of the direction SD2.0 cards are taking. Also available is the SDHC4G, featuring 4GB of memory as the only difference to the 8G unit.



## GEFORCE 8800

If release dates are accurate, a week after this issue hits the shelves NVIDIA should be unveiling its 8<sup>th</sup> generation graphics processing unit.

The GeForce 8800GTX and 8800GTS, which were previously reported to be traditional graphics pipeline parts, have now been confirmed to be unified shader architecture GPUs. NVIDIA had previously stated the advantages of retaining the

traditional rendering pipeline over a unified architecture. However it seems they have gone back on their word, or at least feel they have succeeded in misdirecting their long standing competitor ATI. From the confirmed 128 and 96 fragment streams for the GTX and GTS respectively, the cheaper 8800GTS could be as much as three times faster than the current range topping 7950GX2 in DirectX9 titles. Good news for the consumer, as the 8800GTS is said to have a \$449 RRP compared to the \$599 of the current 7950GX2.

## AWARDS

**T**HE NAG HARDWARE AWARD is reserved for those products that really blow us away, whether by virtue of sheer grunt, value for money, or pure unspecified sexiness. This award will only be bestowed upon products that really stand out, even to our somewhat jaded and cynical eyes, and should be considered among the primary choices when purchasing products in the respective categories. Products that receive this accolade are beyond a doubt rather special. So watch out for them and take note!



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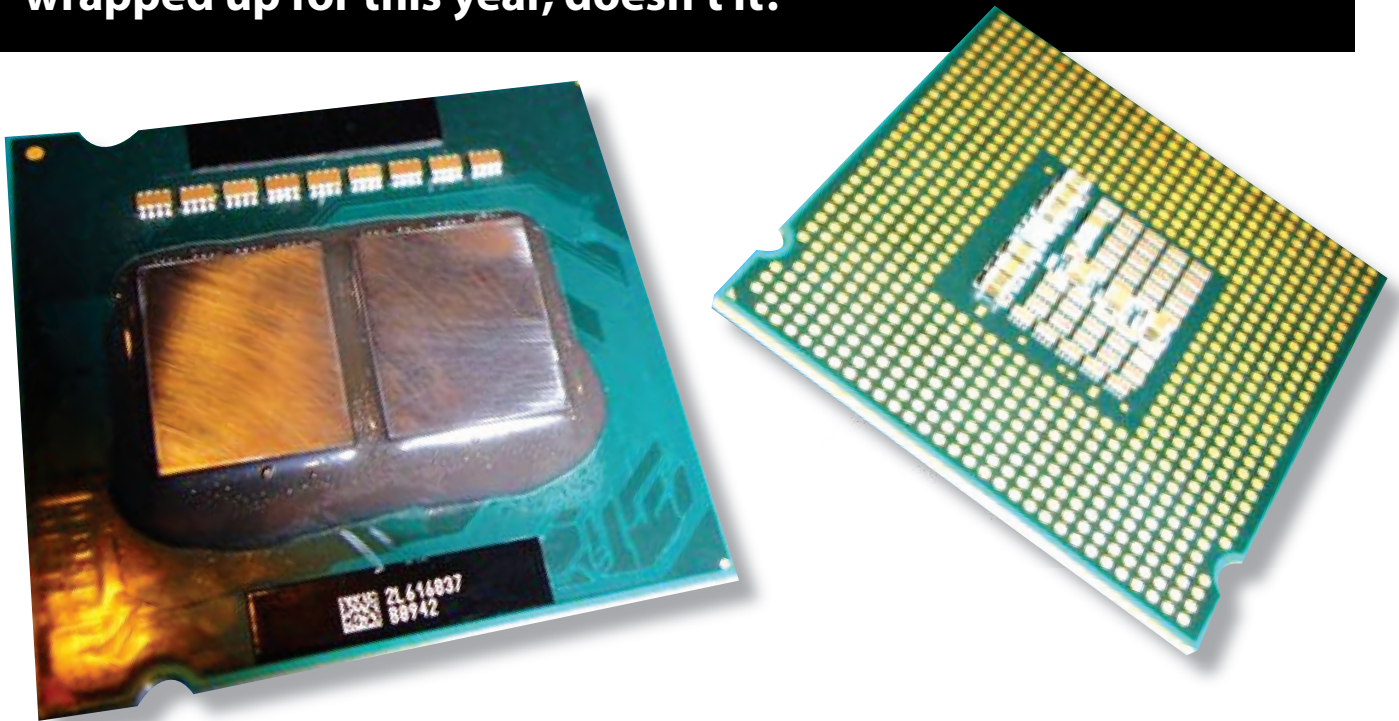


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# ***QUAD-CORE PROCESSING BY NOVEMBER!***

**Well, it looks as though Intel has the CPU technology wars wrapped up for this year, doesn't it?**



“The initial quad-core products will be targeted at the enthusiast or the gamer segments of the marketplace. This becomes the first quad-core chip in the industry that is designed for a personal computer”

**Paul Otellini**  
**Intel President and CEO**

**A**FTER ALL, CORE 2 Duo has rampaged into our desktops with performance figures that simply humiliate all existing processor microarchitectures out there, with no comparable retaliation in sight as yet. The giant chip-maker is comfortably sitting on its throne once more – the outright king of processor performance today.

However, there is one chip that *will* knock Conroe from this perch, and it's been announced that this monster will become available in Q4 of this

year (November), although it was originally only scheduled to hit retail outlets in Q1 of 07. It isn't really a competitor to Conroe, however, as the CPU in question is, naturally, the quad-core Kentsfield from Intel itself.

Clearly the company has smelled blood, and rather than resting on the grunt gap opened up between itself and competitor AMD by the Conroe offerings, the company is moving in for the kill. Rather than wait for a part to be released

that competes with its existing line-up and then responding with the quad-core architecture, Intel is attempting to drive its performance advantage home emphatically with the launch of these latest high-end enthusiast chips.

Although there are a couple of Kentsfield samples wandering about sunny SA (there were two demo systems up and running at the rAge gaming expo for instance), Intel has waited until the release of its official Press Samples before



sending one through to us at NAG, so that we didn't come up with any nasty surprises during our testing regime that the Intel boffins haven't already encountered and seen to. The samples doing the rounds right now are very early versions and could be troublesome, although we haven't heard of any major hassles from those who have been lucky enough to be graced with this killer CPU.

However, so that the Kentsfield (as well as its server-destined sibling, codenamed Clovertown) doesn't come as a complete shock, we thought we'd delve into the technology now so that you techno-junkies out there have a leg up when the CPUs do touch down on our shores.

### THE NITTY GRITTY

The first Kentsfield chip on the Intel roadmap will be a high-end enthusiast part called the Core 2 Extreme QX6700. This CPU will feature a total of four cores each clocked at 2.66GHz on a 266/1,066MHz FSB. It will feature 2MB of cache per core for a total of 8MB, and will be built on the 65nm manufacturing process, which has so far only been adopted en masse by Intel. At the company's recent IDF in San Francisco, it very deliberately highlighted the fact that to date it had shipped 40 million CPU products based on this manufacturing process, compared to its competitor's total of 0.

The clock speed may be lower than the 2.93GHz on offer by the existing X6800 Conroe part, but doing the math promises exciting things from this offering. Four cores at 2.66GHz apiece is a total combined processing power of a staggering 10.64GHz, compared to a total of 5.86GHz on the dual-core X6800! And contemporary benchmarks all concur that this 40% delta is more or less consistent with the performance advantage enjoyed by Kentsfield over the world's fastest desktop processor at the moment, the X6800. Quite a leap.

However, this first quad-core design is not, as some predicted, a native quad-core architecture. Like the existing Core 2 Duo is compared to the older Pentium D and XE models, which are in fact two separate processors combined into a single package, the Core 2 Duo was designed to be a pair of cores on a single die. Kentsfield is, in essence, two Core 2 Duo E6700 parts merged onto a single chip package.

Of course, there are several advantages to taking this route. Faster time to market for Intel, lower cost of chip production, and for consumers, there's the fact that the new offering is pin-compatible with the LGA775 packages of current Core 2 Duo CPUs – which in turn means that any motherboard that supports this CPU line-up will also happily run a Core 2 Quadro when it is released.

One of the bigger disadvantages of this method is the power consumption. Core 2 Duo has been widely acclaimed for offering leading performance levels at TDP ratings far more reasonable than the

crippled old NetBurst architecture could deliver. Conroe chips consume around 80W for the high-end models, while Presler core 965XE chips clocked at a stratospheric 3.73GHz per core ate up in excess of 130W. Kentsfield is back to this same power consumption figure, but delivers performance in excess of double that of the 965XE.

Interestingly, the Cloverland roadmap includes details of the introduction of a quad-core Xeon 5300 rated at a mere 50W TDP in Q1 07...

Intel maintains that native quad-core parts will become available in the second half of 2007, when the company starts delivering products to the retail channels based on its new 45nm production model, a CPU architecture currently codenamed Penryn. The company already has one 45nm fab up and delivering test wafers in Oregon, with another two in Israel and Arizona under construction at the moment. The investment in 45nm will have set the company back \$9bn before the first retail units have rolled off the line. Looking further into the future, the 2010 model range, currently codenamed Geshen, is planned to ship on an incredible 32nm process.

Naturally, for any real world application to take advantage of the processing power on tap, it will have to be optimised for multithreaded operations – a problem that dual-core systems faced when they were first introduced as well. However, since this processor model has become more and more the norm, application developer have all made sure that their software is multithreaded so this shouldn't be any kind of stumbling block for the new powerhouse processors. Intel even had Remedy, the developers of the eagerly-anticipated *Alan Wake* game, demonstrating the title at IDF and showing off how different processor cores are actually tasked with different elements of this game like weather effects, as just one example.

We're expecting our first Kentsfield press review kits to arrive from Intel any day now, and we're positively champing at the bit to start testing the real world performance of this upcoming technology, so we won't go into any benchmark details at all here. Suffice to say that the tests already out there have shown the QX6700 thoroughly thrashing the X6800, which is to be expected, and delivering positively insane results through the full spectrum of benchmarking techniques.

Frankly, unless AMD has some massive technology leap under its hat, these Core 2 Quadro offerings will exist on a completely new performance plane, making it extremely difficult for the competition to, well, compete. Our only reservation right now is the projected retail pricing of these latest Intel beasts, placing the chip firmly in the enthusiast space who has and is willing to spend around \$1000 to have what will undoubtedly be the most potent desktop processor on the planet on the release day. **NAG**

## ALAN WAKE ON INTEL MULTI-CORE ARCHITECTURE

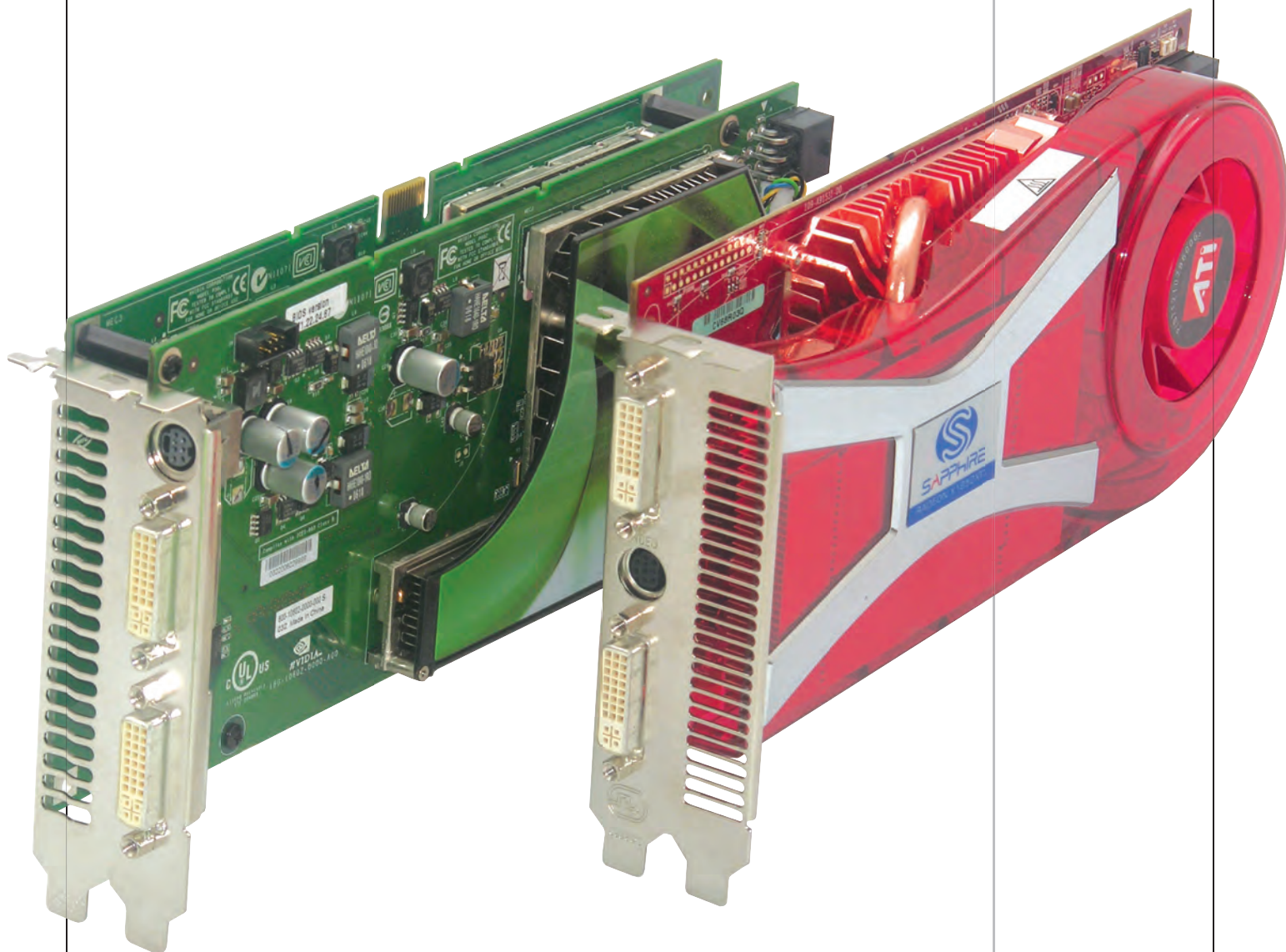
The demo of *Alan Wake* which was shown at IDF by Markus Maki, founder and chairman of the game developer, Remedy, was running on a NVIDIA graphic solution with an overclocked Intel Core 2 Quad processor which was running at 3.73 gigahertz.

Markus elaborates, "What we have is incredibly detailed [in-game actors] in a huge, seamless and dynamic game world. This kind of game simply couldn't be done on a single-core processor. We are using the multiple cores here to stream data in seamlessly in the background and also we're using the [CP] of course to prepare data for the [GPU surrender]. So here we're using a whole CPU core just for the [physical] simulation alone. You simply couldn't deliver this level of [physical] simulation along with the rest of the game experience on a single-core processor. And as a game developer, we're really excited on how far we're now able to push the in-game simulation and create more dynamic, versatile experiences for the player."





# HARDWARE



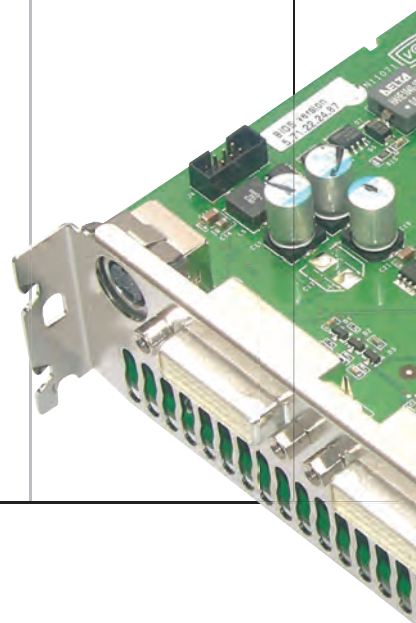
## XFX GEFORCE 7950GX2 520M EXTREME VS. SAPPHIRE RADEON X1950XTX... THE TWILIGHT OF DIRECTX9

**W**ITH THE COMING OF Windows Vista, we're nearing the end of the age of DirectX9. Since the introduction of the Radeon 9700 Pro in 2002, this version of DirectX has been a constant of the gaming world, barring some improvements in shaders near the end of its lifetime. So, the two cards we're comparing now will likely be the fastest cards of their era, before DX10 arrives next year and we move on to the next leg of the graphics race.

Both these cards support all the DX9 features including Shader Model 3.0. The main difference is that while the Sapphire X1950XTX is a fairly traditional card, the XFX 7950GX2 520M Extreme is actually two mobile (notebook)

GPUs on twin boards bolted together, and pre-overclocked to 520MHz core and 650MHz memory from the standard 500/600. The opposition is not without its own innovations however, as the Sapphire card is the first we've received using GDDR4 memory. Both have the dual DVI ports and TV-out features that we've come to expect as standard these days.

In terms of raw numbers, the specs don't look very evenly matched. Putting one high-end GPU up against two from its competitor seems like hardly a fair comparison. But these are the top-end offerings for a single PCI Express slot from each company, and while their performance is different as

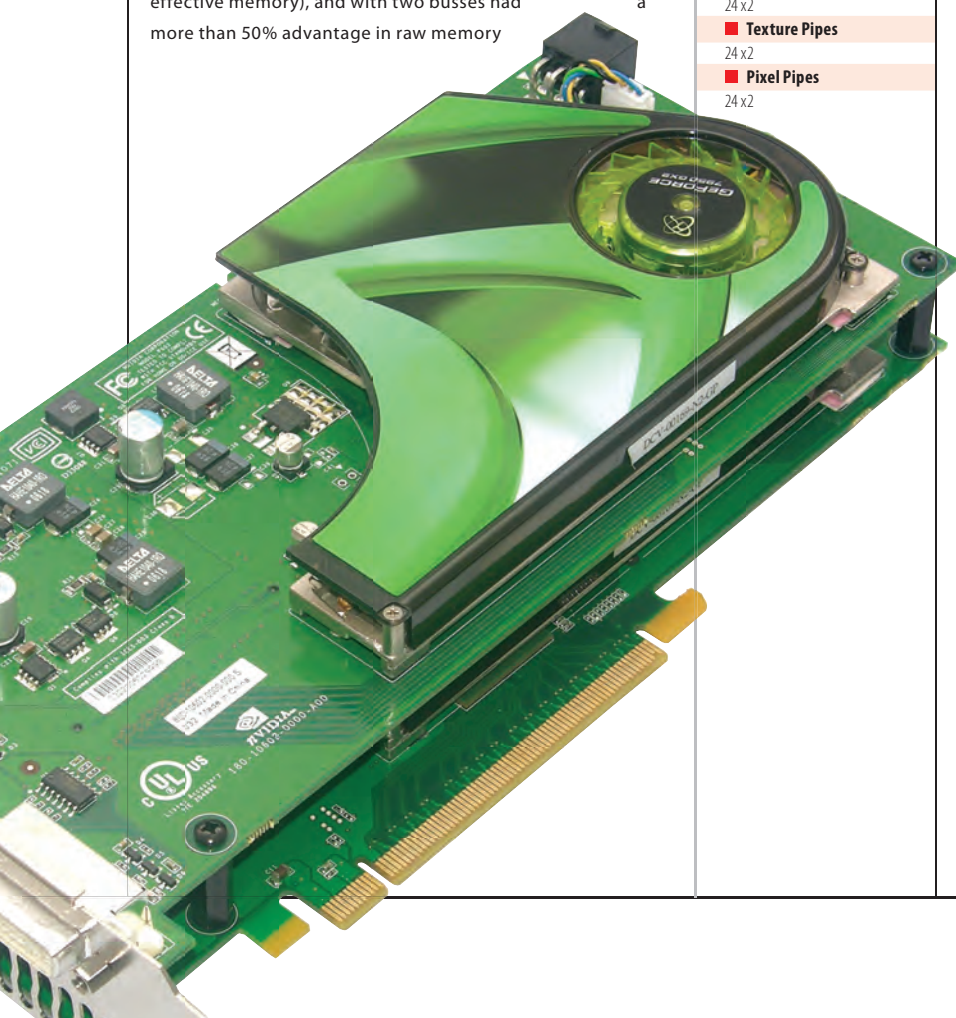




we'll see, so is their pricing. The single GPU on the X1950XTX sports 48 pixel shader units, 8 vertex shader units, 16 texture pipelines, and 16 pixel pipelines. In contrast, the total numbers for the two GPUs on the 7950GX2 are 48 pixel shader units, 16 vertex shader units, 48 texture pipelines and 48 pixel pipelines. Also, since each card in the GX2 has its own memory and bus, it's effectively a 512-bit bus at 1,300MHz effective, which gives a maximum of 83.2GB/sec, compared to a 2GHz effective 256-bit bus that has a max of 64GB/sec on the 1950.

Since the raw numbers are heavily slanted in NVidia's favour, one might expect them to dominate in all the benchmarks. One issue we ran into when benchmarking these cards was that they really need high resolutions to shine. This proved to be a problem, as most of the monitors around are LCDs that max out at 1,280 x 1,024, which is already 3DMark06's default. We were able to find a 1,600 x 1,200 monitor, though ideally we would have also liked to test 1,920 x 1,200 or 2,048 x 1,536, but we just didn't have the screens. It's fairly obvious that cards in this class are designed to drive very high resolutions with all the options on in the latest games, and that running them at anything less is mostly a waste.

We tested both cards in 3Dmark06 in 1,280x1,024 and 1,600 x 1,200, as well as F.E.A.R in 1,600 x 1,200 with 4x AA and 4x Anisotropic filtering. As one can see from the results, the GX2 maintained a commanding lead across the board in 3Dmark. It was also consistently ahead in the overclocked tests. Even though we were able to overclock the X1950XTX's core to 690MHz, the RAM refused to budge at all, so it would seem that the GDDR4 on the card is being pushed as hard as it could at 1000mhz (2,000mhz effective). But the 7950GX2 reached a 625MHz core and 785MHz (1,570 effective memory), and with two busses had a more than 50% advantage in raw memory



## AFX GEFORCE 7950GX2 520M EXTREME

### VITAL INFO

#### ■ Pros

- Fastest for current games
- SLI in a single slot
- Good overclocking

#### ■ Cons

- Expensive!
- Can't do HDR and AA simultaneously
- Can't do DirectX 10

#### ■ Supplier

Axiz [011] 237-7000

#### ■ Internet

www.axiz.co.za

#### ■ RRP

R7,568

#### ■ Reviewer

Toby Hudson

### SPECS

#### ■ Core Speed

520MHz

#### ■ Memory Speed

650MHz (1,300MHz GDDR3)

#### ■ Max Core OC

625MHz

#### ■ Max Memory OC

784MHz

#### ■ Bus Width

256-bit x2

#### ■ Total RAM

512MB x2

#### ■ Memory Bandwidth

41.6GB/s x2

#### ■ Vertex Shaders

8 x2

#### ■ Pixel Shaders

24 x2

#### ■ Texture Pipes

24 x2

#### ■ Pixel Pipes

24 x2

# LEADTEK

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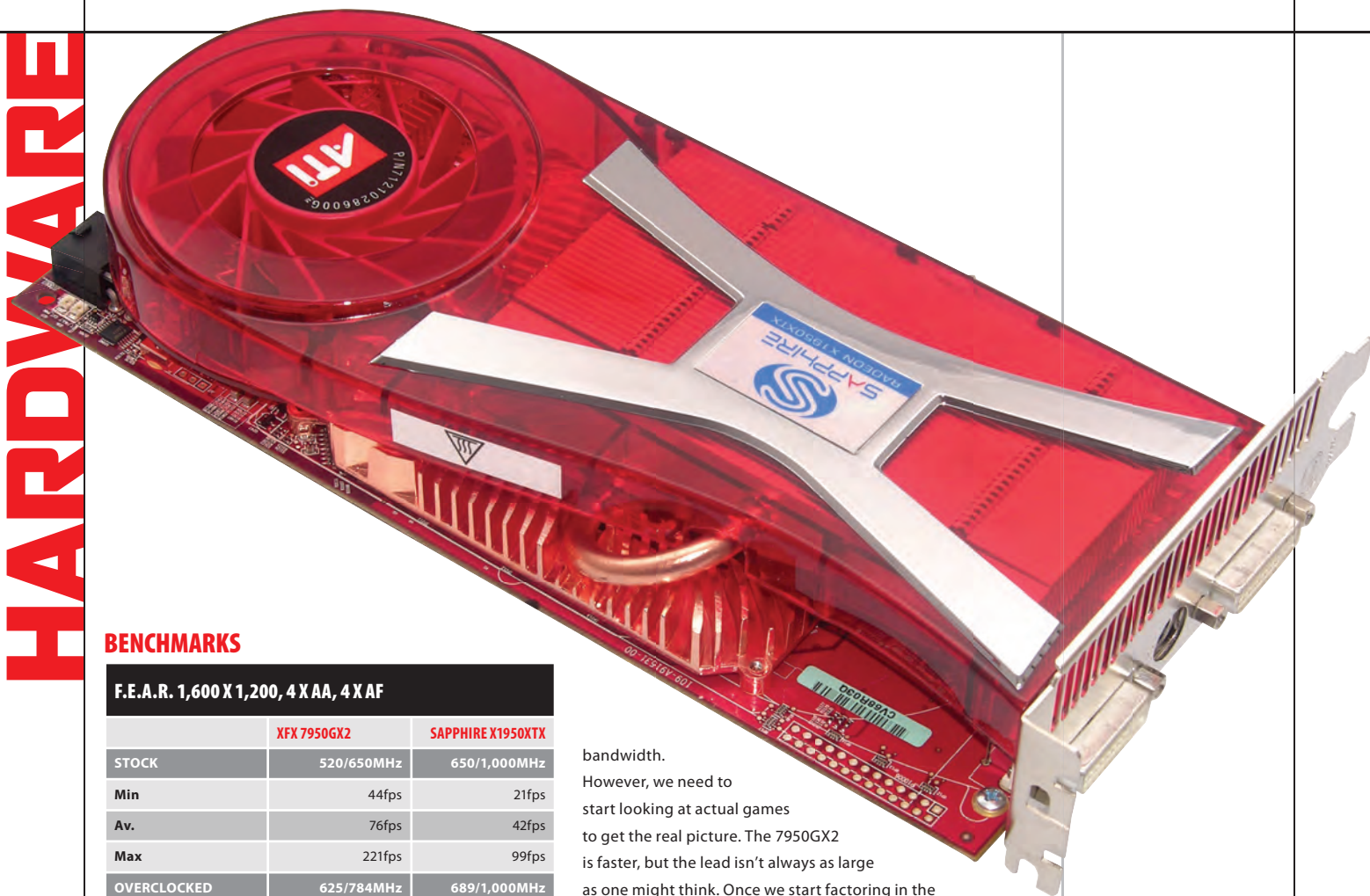
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## BENCHMARKS

## F.E.A.R. 1,600 X 1,200, 4 X AA, 4 X AF

	XFX 7950GX2	SAPPHIRE X1950XTX
STOCK	520/650MHz	650/1,000MHz
Min	44fps	21fps
Av.	76fps	42fps
Max	221fps	99fps
OVERCLOCKED	625/784MHz	689/1,000MHz
Min	48 fps	30fps
Av.	82fps	61fps
Max	227fps	136fps

## SERIOUS SAM II

	XFX 7950GX2	SAPPHIRE X1950XTX
STOCK	520/650MHz	650/1,000MHz
AA, no HDR		
1,280 x 1,024	88.3fps	60.9fps
1,600 x 1,200	76.2fps	49.7fps
HDR, no AA		
1,280 x 1,024	90.0fps	66.6fps
1,600 x 1,200	67.0fps	52.3fps
AA + HDR		
1,280 x 1,024	-	50.9fps
1,600 x 1,200	-	38.1fps
OVERCLOCKED	625/784MHz 689/1,000MHz	650/1,000MHz
AA, no HDR		
1,280 x 1,024	94.1fps	64.1fps
1,600 x 1,200	79.6fps	51.2fps
HDR, no AA		
1,280 x 1,024	91.9fps	69.6fps
1,600 x 1,200	68.7fps	54.1fps
AA + HDR		
1,280 x 1,024	-	51.5fps
1,600 x 1,200	-	39.7fps

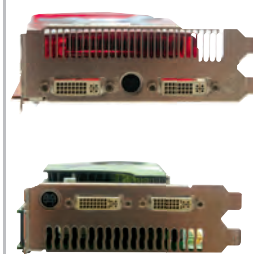
bandwidth.

However, we need to start looking at actual games to get the real picture. The 7950GX2 is faster, but the lead isn't always as large

as one might think. Once we start factoring in the price difference, the X1950XTX looks pretty good for what it delivers. Also considering that it can do High Dynamic Range rendering and antialiasing at the same time while the 7950GX2 can't, that gives it a noticeable edge on image quality if you're willing to take the performance hit of having both features on, which on a card this powerful isn't usually that bad. We ran some additional tests with *Serious Sam II*, comparing the cards with either HDR or AA, and in the 1950's case, both.

Sometimes buying a card that's overpowered for many current games is seen as future-proofing for games still coming up, but DirectX10 creates a problem here. None of the currently shipping graphics cards on the market have hardware capable of full DX10 support, so most games will have to run in DirectX9. That might not seem too bad, but early tests have shown us that DX9 is running 10-15% slower under Windows Vista, because the 3D desktop is active at all times and DX9 is mostly just included for legacy support in Vista. Staying on Windows XP will likely not be an option for serious gamers, because DX10 will not be available for XP due to a significant overhaul in the system that makes it incompatible with XP's driver model. So, once everyone moves to Vista, their DX9 games will slow down. Not moving to Vista means no support for DX10 games, and current cards can't run them anyway. So it's a real rock and a hard place in the market right now. We'd expect to see many vendors trying to unload the last of the line DX9 generation hardware with price cuts as the DX10 parts from ATI and NVIDIA near release. This may create some good bargains for people looking to speed up their existing games, but for anyone looking to play the latest and greatest titles early next year, it will just be obsolete in a few months. **NAG**

The 1950's cooler looks loud, but in our tests it wasn't very noticeable above the case fans





## BENCHMARKS CONT...

### 3DMARK06 1,280 X 1,024

	XFX 7950GX2	SAPPHIRE X1950XTX
STOCK	520/650MHz	650/1000MHz
Overall	8,360	6,298
SM 2.0	3,787	2,466
HDR/SM3.0	3,667	2,719
CPU	2,114	2,171
OVERCLOCKED	625/784MHz	689/1,000MHz
Overall	8,579	6,478
SM 2.0	3,865	2,552
HDR/SM3.0	3,836	2,815
CPU	2,123	2,168

### 3DMARK06 1,600 X 1,200

	XFX 7950GX2	SAPPHIRE X1950XTX
STOCK	520/650MHz	650/1000MHz
Overall	7,243	5,517
SM 2.0	3,225	2,196
HDR/SM3.0	2,968	2,231
CPU	2,122	2,170
OVERCLOCKED	625/784MHz	689/1,000MHz
Overall	7,434	5,679
SM 2.0	3,295	2,271
HDR/SM3.0	3,125	2,311
CPU	2,098	2,167

## SAPPHIRE RADEON X1950XTX

### VITAL INFO

#### ■ Pros

- Fast at a reasonable price
- Can do AA and HDR simultaneously
- New cooler is not as noisy

#### ■ Cons

- Not as fast as SLI or a GX2
- Still can't do DirectX 10
- Barely overclockable

#### ■ Supplier

Esquire 0861 70 00 00

#### ■ Internet

www.esquire.co.za

#### ■ RRP

R4,699

#### ■ Reviewer

Toby Hudon

### SPECS

#### ■ Core Speed

650MHz

#### ■ Memory Speed

1,000MHz (2,000MHz GDDR4)

#### ■ Max Core OC

689MHz

#### ■ Max Memory OC

1,000MHz

#### ■ Bus Width

256-bit

#### ■ Total RAM

512MB

#### ■ Memory Bandwidth

64GB/s

#### ■ Vertex Shaders

8

#### ■ Pixel Shaders

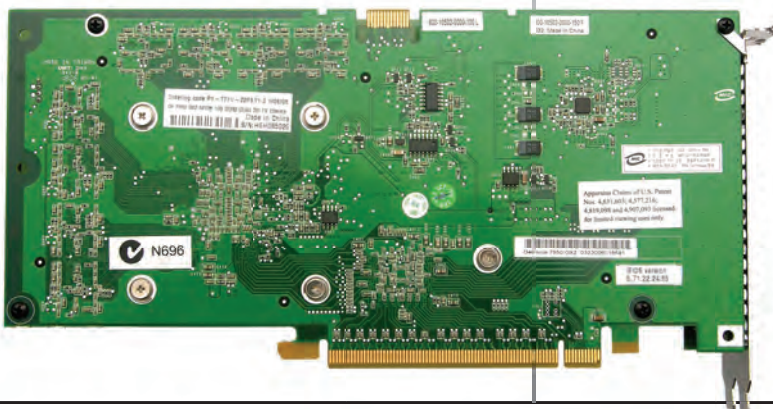
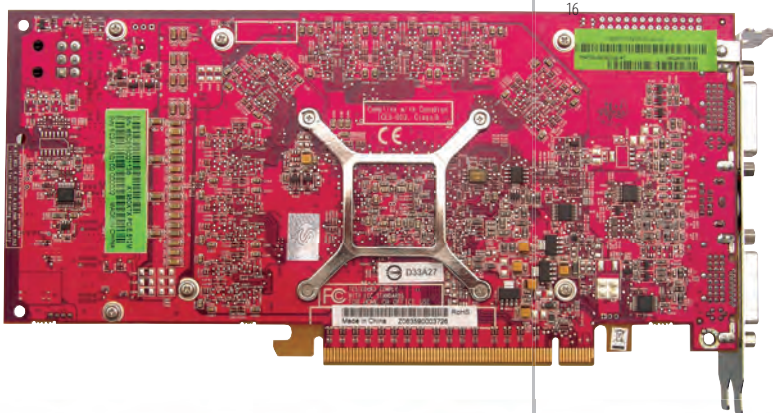
48

#### ■ Texture Pipes

16

#### ■ Pixel Pipes

16



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# WINFAST PX7900GS TDHPX7900GS TDH

IT SHOULD COME AS no surprise to anyone by now. NVIDIA has done it again. It has added another product to the GeForce 7 family. If you've been following the progress of the 7 series, you should know that including this GPU, NVIDIA has a total of 15 graphics accelerators bearing the GeForce 7 name (since mid 2005). From the sub-\$99 parts all the way to the \$599 enthusiast products like the 7950GX2.

The Winfast PX7900GS is one of the later products released to occupy the upper mid-range in performance. It should be no surprise that this GPU is the G71 core featured on all other 7900 parts. The difference here is that the GS has one quad disabled, resulting in a graphics core housing 20 fragment pipelines, and 7 vertex processors. So much like the 7800GT, however the 7900GS runs cooler, faster and has lower heat dissipation than the 7800GS it replaces. It is also cheaper with an RRP of \$199, which if you haven't noticed, means it replaces the 7600GT at this price point.

So, for the same amount of money that a 7600GT would have cost you, you instead get 8 extra pipelines, an additional 2 vertex units, and double the data bit-width, all resulting in far better performance and obviously better value for your money. The 7900GS is once again proof of how NVIDIA can bring mainstream performance very close to high-end levels without asking the ridiculous prices of a range-topper.

That ideology, however, doesn't continue through into the Winfast PX7900GS TDH. Let us explain why. The Winfast PX7900GS costs much more than it should, ultimately defeating the purpose of the 7900GS. In fact, it costs more than some 7950GT cards, which makes you wonder what the actual purpose of this product is. While the package is impressive as you do receive two games in the form of *Serious Sam 2* and *SpellForce*, both excellent titles and well worth having, the question is, do you want a 7900GS with two games that you may not have bought or already have, over a 7900GT or 7950GT?

This may not be a failing on Leadtek's part, but somewhere down the chain. Either way, the graphics card costs about R1,000 more than it should, making the entire exercise expensive.

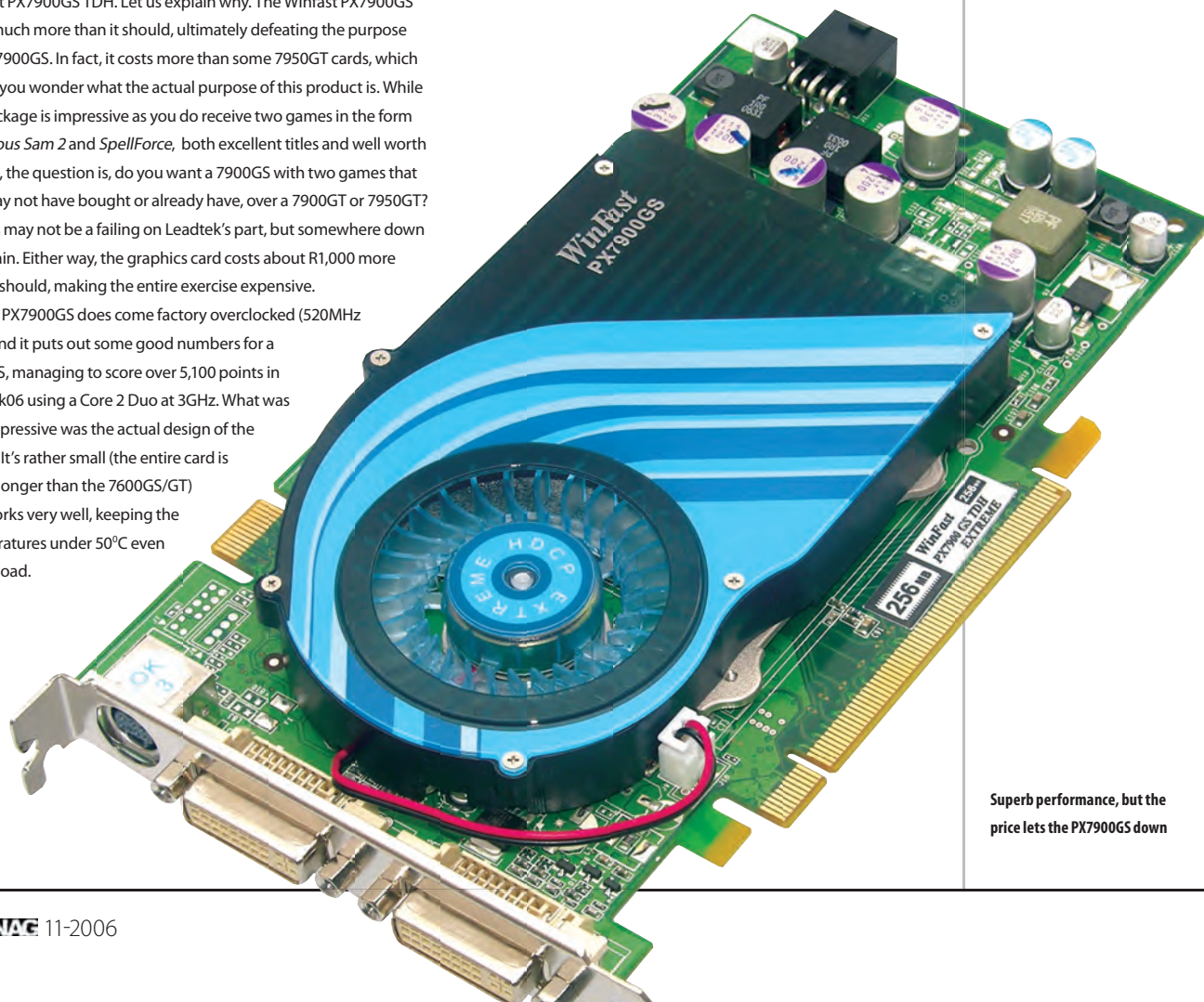
The PX7900GS does come factory overclocked (520MHz core) and it puts out some good numbers for a 7900GS, managing to score over 5,100 points in 3DMark06 using a Core 2 Duo at 3GHz. What was also impressive was the actual design of the cooler. It's rather small (the entire card is a little longer than the 7600GS/GT) and works very well, keeping the temperatures under 50°C even under load.

As usual, however, factory overclocked models don't have as much room for improvement, and the PX7900GS is no different. The card locked up the machine at 560MHz, which is only 40MHz higher than factory settings, but with that said, the memory was impressive, recording 1,700MHz, resulting in massive amounts of bandwidth eclipsing that of even the mighty 7900GTX.

This is great considering the move by games and gamers alike to HD screens and settings. One really appreciates the added performance when gaming at high resolutions like 1,600 x 1,200 where bandwidth is king, and fill-rate is at its limits. This is where the PX7900GS stands out, managing to stay above the 5,000 point mark in 3DMark05 with 4x AA and 16x AF - mighty impressive by any standard. Even if you don't use such settings to play games, it's always good to know that you can should you choose too. As far as performance goes, the PX7900GS cannot be faulted in any sphere.

Leadtek would have had a winner on its hands had it not been for the price. At the correct price there would be no better graphics card to buy and it would have possibly taken the 6600GT's throne as the best mid-range graphics card ever.

Sadly, this is not the case. There is fun to be had with the 7900GS and even more performance can be extracted from this card with time and dedication. As it stands, however, it really is unfair to expect people to pay 7950GT prices for what essentially is a 7600GT replacement in the performance/price pyramid. **NAG**



## VITAL INFO

### Pros

- Performance
- Bundle

### Cons

- Price

### Supplier

Corex [011] 707-5000

### Internet

www.winfast.com

### RRP

R2,999

### Reviewer

Russell Bennett

## SPECS

### Specs

Leadtek PX7900GS

### Core Chip

G71

### Interface

PCI-E X16

### GPU clock

520MHz

### RAM Type & Speed

256MB GDDR3 @ 1.4GHz (700MHz)

### Pixel Pipelines

20

### RAM Interface

256-bit (4 x 64-bit)

### RAM Bandwidth

44.8GB/s

Superb performance, but the price lets the PX7900GS down



# MADKATZ PSP TRAVEL PACK

**P**SP. PLAYSTATION PORTABLE. WHICH is to say, you can take it with you. This is all very good and well in theory, but the reality is somewhat more complicated. You see, the PSP's battery isn't infinite (neither, let's be honest, is it particularly long-lasting, for that matter), so if you plan on using it a fair amount, and to be out for a while, then you need to allow for that fact, meaning that you had better keep the charger with you. Also, unless you are planning on playing a single game *ad nauseam* (and that isn't impossible, especially in light of *Tekken Dark Resurrection*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue), you will likely have several UMDs to take along. Especially if you have some movies you want to watch along the way. Add to that a cleaning chamois, earphones, spare Memory Sticks and a USB cable (for times when you might want to transfer photos or music or such to or from a friend's computer), and suddenly you're carrying around quite the mass of accessories.

Enter the Travel Pack for PSP, from MadCatz. This is a small over-the-shoulder backpack that accommodates all of the above-mentioned accessories, with a little room to spare. The pack comes with a PSP carry-folder that can replace the standard pouch. This can slot under a designated strap in the pack itself. Other pouches in the main compartment hold a USB charger and data cable, a car charger kit (handy!) and several UMD cases and appropriate pouches. The above items are all included in the pack. Other spaces in the bag are designed for up to eight Memory Sticks and a set of earphones. There is an external compartment at the front, which is very thin, so mostly one would keep notes on paper or the like, and a tiny compartment on the carry-strap, which is ideal for small change. A small amount of assorted bric-a-brac can be squeezed into the main compartment between the other stuff.

A clever design feature is the presence of a small hole that a headset cable can be fed through – this way, one can listen to music while the handheld itself is securely in the back, on one's back. Not so clever is the fact that the PSP itself is secured right at the top of the main compartment, resulting in a slightly top-heavy feel that is less than ideal. While not a major gripe, this does nonetheless result in the bag not feeling 'quite right' while being worn. In fact, unless one has something to add weight to the bottom, it is slightly uncomfortable. Furthermore, the design features only one strap, so it can be worn over one shoulder – the left one. If you prefer to sling it over your right shoulder – too bad! The strap cannot be shortened enough to offset the top-heaviness, either.

Overall, this is a useful product with some minor flaws. If you find yourself constantly having to make arrangements to carry your PSP's accessories, then this is for you. **NAG**

## VITAL INFO

### ■ Pros

- Convenient
- Includes useful cables

### ■ Cons

- Could be more ergonomic

### ■ Supplier

Greenstone Media Trading  
[021] 557-6248

### ■ Internet

www.madkatz.com

### ■ RRP

R399

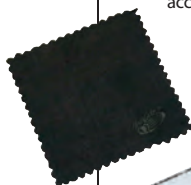
### ■ Reviewer

Alex Jelagin

## SPECS

### ■ Includes

Satchel, charging and data cables, PSP holder, cleaning cloth, screen protectors and UMD cases



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# SEASONIC S12 600WATT POWER SUPPLY UNIT

**I**N THE GAMING AND enthusiast world of ever increasing power requirements, one thing is becoming a given, and that is you can never have enough power. Your PSU is either going to save your hardware or destroy it, so generic units promising 500W of power are not something you would want to put too much faith in. Seasonic, however, is promising even more power, but more than that promise, it guarantees stable performance at 600W. With an efficiency value stated at greater than 80% you can be sure that you can throw pretty much anything at this power supply and it will take it in its stride.

Seasonic is a veteran as far as power supply units go. It may not be known to many, but Seasonic has been around for 36 years, which is longer than most enthusiasts and gamers have been around. With all those years in the industry, Seasonic has poured that experience into the S12, making sure that it's whisper quiet at its loudest, but provides some of the most stable power available at the same time. The S12 could very well be amongst the quietest power supply units ever produced. As far as features are concerned, this unit has everything you will ever need and that little

bit extra. It's SLI approved, but is also suitable for CrossFire configurations, delivering a maximum of 432W on the 12V rails, which is more than enough for most users. It even supports the EPS 32-pin standard, along with the regular BTX and ATX2.2 standards. This flexibility may not necessarily be a boon for the average user, but should you ever need the connector, you would be glad you bought the Seasonic.

Aesthetically, you will not be disappointed. Set in gloss black, the unit exudes quality and stability. The weight alone would be enough to convince you as you are not likely to find many power supplies that are as sturdy as the S12. What would have been nice to see on the S12 is a cable management system, but sadly this is not the case and as such, you are left with a number of wires to manage. This is a minor issue considering that the S12 is exceptional in every other aspect.

As far as power supply units go, this unit is amongst the best you will ever get. If you are in the market for a PSU or already have one that you are not happy with, then you would be doing yourself a disservice by not buying the Seasonic S12 unit. **NAG**

## VITAL INFO

### Pros

- Power delivery
- Silent operation
- Features
- Build quality

### Cons

- Price

### Supplier

David@globalparts.co.za

### Internet

www.seasonic.com

### RRP

R1,249

### Reviewer

Neo Sibeko

## SPECS

### Dimensions

150mm x 140mm x 86mm (L x W x H)

### Power Rails

2 x 12V (18A), 1 x 5V (30A), +3.3V (30A), -12V (0.8A), +5VSB (2.0A)





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# LAZY GAMER'S GUIDE

## KILLZONE PRESS KIT

**O**NE OF THE MANY, many cool things about working in the gaming industry, is the press kit. To announce the upcoming *Killzone: Liberation* for the PSP, our good friends over at Ster Kinekor sent us the official *Killzone: Liberation* press kit. The kit itself arrived in a swanky rubbery bag. Inside was a pre-production copy of the game along with other related materials, all held in place by a large plastic sheet with subdivided pouches. Titled Rapid Reaction Force / Operations Field Pack, this specific press kit was so neat we decided to share it with you.

### COMBAT GEAR

No press kit is complete without a sweet shirt that you can wear to impress your friends and win over the lady gamers. The *Killzone: Liberation* shirt has the logo on the front, and some smart catchphrase on the back. It's not really about what's on it, just that you have it.



### TACTICAL DOSSIER

This full-colour booklet contains a game overview, a crash-course on the story as well as stunning glossy artwork detailing the vehicles, characters and environments in the game. The weapons are also detailed, along with explanations of the multiplayer modes.

### GROUND ASSAULT

The pre-production version of the game, which roughly translates to 'preview code'. In other words, the game should work and be mostly complete, but one can expect bugs, crashing or other preview-code related things.

### BATTLEFIELD INTEL

The final component to the press kit (as well as one of the most important pieces for doing our job) is the press kit CD. It contains assets, information, videos and other media that will be useful for writing previews or doing any kind of coverage - plus it saves on bandwidth, because we don't have to download the stuff ourselves.





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# MULTIPLAYER

## RAGE REPORT

**A**T A TIME OF unrest in the international gaming industry, with the 'restructuring' of E3 2007, South Africa's equivalent trade show is still going from strength to strength. rAge 2006 broke records in every department. The NAG LAN, the largest ever held in Africa, sold all 1,200 tickets in less than a month, and the remaining demand was so great that people began selling tickets online at inflated prices. In an official press release, rAge coordinator Michael James was confident that "... if as many as 500 additional seats had been up for grabs, they would have also been filled."

rAge was also the largest yet in terms of physical size. Every last centimetre of the Dome was taken up by exhibitors, competitions and the NAG LAN. Electronic Arts built what looked like a castle wall at its stand, which was later stormed by hordes of barbarians when time came to throw out free gifts. The Xbox 360 central exhibit was even grander, with green pillars extending skywards and acrobats hanging from the ceiling on white ribbons. Other, smaller stands such as Animeworks could barely cope with the crowd at times.

Record numbers also extended to the main competitive gaming tournaments. *Quake 4*, *Counter-Strike: Source* and *WarCraft III: Defence of the Ancients* were all booked out, and between the three games, a staggering R160,000 in prizes was given away to the winners – the largest prize purse in the history of South African gaming. However, the true measure of success was the number of spectators who came to view the expo and watch the tournaments.

Winners of *Counter-Strike*, Damage Control, have now claimed both major tournaments of 2006, proving their dominance in the local scene. "We don't get that nervous anymore," said Chris "Apocalypse" Lautre, spokesperson for the team. "After playing in almost every final since 2003, and playing overseas, the pressure just isn't as much as it used to be." Regarding the running of the tournament, he added, "Bravado (the third-place team) had a hard time. One of their players kept dropping from the server in the lower final. The microphones weren't working on the competition PCs, and the interp was set to online for the beginning of the game. The setbacks could have very easily been avoided if a little more preparation had been done beforehand."

The *DotA* competition was won by former vanilla *WarCraft III* team Nightfall, coming off their victory at Uberlan earlier this year. Ross "Cavalier" McIlroy spoke to NAG about the team's experience. "Every game was intense up to a point," he said, "but we were never on the back foot, never defending. I would say the win was convincing, but we had to play hard. The final matches were very

different, and both required us to be on top of our game."

"There were many constraints within which the tournament had to be run, so it was never going to be perfect," he continued. "Several people with experience tried to offer insight into the possible problems and not all of this advice was taken. As a result, a few teams were hard done by, winning both of their games and still getting eliminated. Ultimately, the organisers did their best, but the fundamental flaws in the rules couldn't be fixed by any amount of administration. They do, however, realise that the rules were flawed, and thus we can look forward to the next event."



## WARNING

"DO NOT FEED THE GAMERS"

NAG LAN @ rAge  
1200 gamers  
54 hours of gaming  
1 network

### TOURNAMENT RESULTS

#### Counter-Strike: Source

- 1 **Damage Control** R50,000  
+ five Intel Core 2 Duo processors worth R50,000
- 2 **Zero Effect** R15,000
- 3 **Bravado** R5,000
- 4 **Head**

#### WarCraft III: Defence of the Ancients

- 1 **Nightfall Blacksmiths** R5,000  
+ ATI hardware worth R5,000
- 2 **Own3d** R2,500
- 3 **KAI** R1,500
- 4 **Smurfs** R750



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RAGE  
REPORTSOUTH AFRICA HOSTS  
INTERNATIONAL QUAKE 4  
CHAMPIONSHIP

FOR ALL BUT THE very best South African gamers, testing one's skills against seasoned international professionals had long been a far-fetched dream. Only the winners of the local qualifiers had the opportunities to attend events like the Electronic Sports World Cup, while the average gamer followed the matches from home, but could never feel the same pressure and excitement. However, due to continuous improvements in the local competitive gaming industry, we have now seen the first international breakthrough on South African soil.

Strangely enough, the five international competitors who participated in the rAge *Quake 4* tournament all came for different reasons. Gareth "Garpy" Marshall, one of the United Kingdom's top players, has family living in Cape Town. Girlz of Destruction members Alana "Ms.X" Reid and Therese "Trito" Andersson came to promote their sponsor, VIA, at the exhibition. African-American *Quake 4* dueller Rafik "Lost-Cause" Bryant was invited by our local players on Internet Relay Chat, and had been wanting to visit the country for some time. But it's still a mystery as to why the USA's other son, Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel, decided to return.

The *Quake 4* tournament was one of the main events of the weekend, fully sponsored by Telkom. Despite a cramped playing area at the Telkom stand and the premature death of two of the computers, the tournament went ahead smoothly. Surprisingly, most of the international players said that they were used to

worse setups, and commended the fact that the competition ran without delays. In total, thirty-two players participated, including the five internationals, South African *Quake 4* champion Stephen "Ph4ntom" Cloete, *Unreal Tournament* champion Nico-Louis "Mielie" Joubert, and the talented new kids on the block, Mark "Lazarith" Fairbank and William "Curious" Yates.

The upper bracket of the tournament was enthralling from the first match. Fatal1ty, Lost-Cause and Garpy all beat their South African opponents, but Ms.X and Trito fell to local veterans Gandulf and Mielie. The second round then pitted Lost-Cause against Mielie, Fatal1ty against Gandulf and Garpy against Lazarith. In all three cases the international players triumphed, but not without sturdy resistance. Mielie lost 11-14 on Lost-Cause's home map, Phrantic, coming the closest of all the local players to win it. Lazarith lost 15-9 to Garpy in a game that was neck-and-neck until the very end. To finish the round, Ph4ntom dispatched Curious convincingly.

The upper bracket semi-finals were played on the main stage in front of an animated crowd. It was clear that Garpy had most of the local fans on his side, and shouts of support resonated through the Dome during his match against Fatal1ty. Much to the delight of the spectators, he won in two straight maps. All of South Africa's hopes were then pinned on Ph4ntom, but he was unable to overcome the solid aim and tactical play of Lost-Cause, who also won in





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two maps. This set up lower bracket encounters between Ph4ntom and Lazarith, and Fatal1ty and Mielie. Lazarith succeeded in taking his match to three maps by winning Placebo Effect, but fell just short of upsetting the South African champion on the deciding map, Monsoon. Mielie put up a spirited fight against Fatal1ty, also on Placebo Effect, but lost Galang by a large margin. It would be up to Ph4ntom to make the last attempt by a South African to finish in the top three.

Knowing that he would probably lose Placebo, his weakest map, Ph4ntom concentrated on Phrantic. Fatal1ty controlled the map during the first ten minutes to build up a 9-2 lead, but Ph4ntom mounted an impressive comeback in the final five. Unfortunately for the South African, he missed three crucial rockets at the red armour which cost him the game. Final score: 12-10 to Fatal1ty.

In the upper bracket final, Lost-Cause defeated Garpy, 10-5 on Phrantic and 5-4 on Placebo Effect, guaranteeing himself a spot in the top two. Garpy had to drop to the lower bracket to face Fatal1ty for the remaining place in the grand final, but in a reversal of fortune it was the American who came out ahead after two games on Monsoon (17:14 and 23:14).

Nestled amongst a huge cluster of onlookers at the Telkom stand – Fatal1ty's stuffed tiger atop his monitor, Lost-Cause's father standing behind him – the grand final began. Lost-Cause started strong, taking an early lead on Phrantic, then playing defensively to ward off Fatal1ty's attempted comeback. When he held control of Monsoon with a two frag lead and half a minute left on the clock, it looked as though he would win rAge without incident. However, Fatal1ty pulled off a stunning manoeuvre to take back a frag, then found two quick conversions to win the game 19:18. Holding onto his momentum, he then won Placebo Effect by a massive margin (26:4), forcing the grand final into a second set. It was no surprise that he then picked Placebo again, and won it 31:9. A Fatal1ty victory now seemed equally possible, but fortune was to side with Lost-Cause, who scraped through to win the remaining two maps, Phrantic 16-10 and Monsoon 15-13.

"This tournament was a little different from most of my other tournaments," said an elated Rafik after the match. "I actually expected to win this one. He beat me on the first Monsoon, I didn't expect that, and then on Placebo I just shut down. But I kept my confidence up for the last Phrantic and Monsoon, and brought it home that time."

Rafik's current status as one of the best players in the world is the result of ten years' dedicated training, but only recently did he break into the upper echelon of the scene. "I wanted to be a pro-gamer pretty much my whole life, since I saw my first Fatal1ty demo," he said. "I'm really happy to be able to get to this level of gameplay. Usually, I'm out in the top sixteen or something, and now I'm able to get into the finals." Beating Fatal1ty, his childhood hero, made the victory all the more sweet.

When asked about the rAge atmosphere, he smiled and admitted: "I usually get kind of bored at events, but I had a lot of friends around so it was cool. The organisers did a good job not delaying and I really enjoyed rAge, especially the stage. But the people always make the trip for me. My dad was here. This is the first tournament of mine he's ever attended. He hasn't always supported gaming, but this time he came out and now he's actually helping me manage my gaming career."

Some might call it poetic justice that a player of African descent was able to win the biggest tournament in Africa, but the outgoing, dreadlocked gamer believes that nationality plays little part. "I don't really think about that," he said. "I'm just a person that plays, you know. I like the history here and it's great to find out about my heritage. But in games, with all the different nationalities, I just play, although I do want to mention that I've been approached to help start a school in Soweto for underprivileged gamers."

# RAGE REPORT

## RESULTS

1	Rafik "Lost-Cause" Bryant (USA)	R10,000
2	Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel (USA)	R5,000
3	Gareth "Garpy" Marshall (UK)	R4,000
4	Stephen "Ph4ntom" Cloete (South Africa)	R3,000
5	Nico-Louis "Mielie" Joubert (South Africa)	R1,500
6	Mark "Lazarith" Fairbank (South Africa)	R800
7	William "Curious" Yates (South Africa)	R500
8	Rikus "Gandulf" Jordaan (South Africa)	R200





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# MS.X AND TRITO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## RAGE REPORT

**W**HEN A GIRL GETS paid to fly to exotic locations around the world, you'd probably think she was a model or air hostess, but Alana "Ms.X" Reid and Therese "Trito" Andersson get flown around the world to attend gaming tournaments. After running away with the first three places at the Ms Quakecon tournament in 2005, the "Girlz of Destruction" were taken on board by VIA Technologies as the company's main marketing strategy. Since then, they have attended every major *Quake 4* tournament, and even live in a dedicated gaming house, the "Home of Chrome" in Sweden.

### How much work does it take to be a Girl of Destruction?

Trito: We have a busy schedule. After rAge we're going to London for the World Series of Video Games and then straight away to Digital Life in New York.

Ms.X: If we've just come back from an event, sometimes we're exhausted and we stay away from gaming for a couple of days. But I'd say on average anywhere from two to ten hours a day sounds about reasonable.

### With all the additional practice at the Home of Chrome, would you say your games have improved?

Trito: Yes, I would say we are improving. We're not at Lost-Cause and Fatal1ty's skill level yet, but I can see the difference. When *Quake 4* came out there were certain players I couldn't beat, but I'm starting to beat them now.

### What's a typical day like at the house?

Trito: If we have a lot of gamers over, there are always games going on, even at six in the morning because someone hasn't gone to bed yet. For example, we make up these mini-tournaments for all people in the house, with two groups battling each other. I haven't been able to talk to them, but I'm sure they have a winner of the last one by now.

### Who's your favourite guest?

Ms.X: I'd have to say Fatal1ty.

Trito: He's a gentleman. He carries our grocery bags, defrosts our freezer, cooks us food, he cleans, he does his dishes all the time. He's like, 'Gee, girls, do you want me to help with something? Do you want me to mow your lawn?' He's very helpful.

### Tell us about the Fatal1ty we don't see at tournaments.

Ms.X & Trito: Ooh!

Trito: He hides behind a mask.



Ms.X: I don't even know where to begin. We had a prize at our house for who's the most aggressive, most vocal, when they play... And, um, Johnathan (Fatal1ty) takes the cake on that one.

### What did you think of the South African standard of play?

Trito: I was happily surprised. There are many skilled gamers here and it would be really interesting to see what would happen if they had as fast Internet connections as we have in Sweden, and backing by sponsors so they could go to international tournaments.

Ms.X: Yeah, I didn't really expect it. Ph4ntom was the only player I'd heard of before rAge. A lot of South African Gaming doesn't get out to international Websites, so I didn't expect anyone to really be any good or even play *Quake* for that matter.

### How did South African male gamers react after they played you?

Ms.X: I got a pummel (kill with the gauntlet in *Quake 4*) on one of my opponents and he wasn't too happy. He really tried to get one back on me. He was nice though. We talked and had a joke about it afterward, but at the time I think he was a little angry.

### What was your overall experience of rAge 2006?

Ms.X: I've honestly never visited a country with this kind of hospitality. To me it felt like red carpet treatment from before we even left. We got messages from people online and when we got here, everyone was extremely courteous to us and the other internationals. **NAG**



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# CHROME HOUNDS

**A** LONG, LONG TIME AGO, in a gaming galaxy far away, the *Mechwarrior* series gave starry-eyed gamers the chance to pilot massive mechs, insane tonnage bipedal tanks capable of turning the tide of war. Each of those gamers cried in unison, "This should have online multiplayer!". Eventually, there was rudimentary online multiplayer, but other problems bogged the series down. Eventually, the *Mechwarrior* license all but faded into obscurity with only a few arcade action-orientated offerings, such as *Mechassault*, or the obscure *Steel Battalion* with its 50+ button \$200 controller, remaining.

*Chrome Hounds* appeared out of almost nowhere for the Xbox 360, and with it, the most surprising gift of all to fans of the mech-combat genre, an online

mode to die for. The online persistent war constantly evolves as players form squads vie for territory. Squads are aligned to one of the three factions, and from there they sortie out and capture territories by completing missions for their faction. These missions are either against real players, or can be fought against CPU opponents - perfect for Rookie squads still finding their feet. Squads can cooperate and complement each other in terms of firepower and movement, while the specific role types keep things very class-based. The Commander class, for example, is capable of directing the squad, maintaining communications (which is vital) as well as alerting squads to enemy activity. The other role types are less exotic, such as Soldier or Heavy Gunner.

As the battle wages, squads will receive reports and alerts depending on what's going on in the war. Calls for help may appear, as well as orders from the nation about which territory to attack next. Money earned in these missions can be used to purchase new parts, or donated to the cause. After the war is over and won, medals are awarded to squads with exemplary performance as well as accolades.

Fans of more thoughtful, tactical combat as well as the construction of mechs will enjoy *Chrome Hounds*, which realistically only lacks one major component: more South African players. If you own an Xbox 360 and *Chrome Hounds*, search around for local squads or join the Recreational Zone squad, 'Cahist Dragons', which could always do with more team-members. **NAG**





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# GUILD WARS NIGHTFALL

Release: October 27

**T**HUS FAR, ARENET HAS managed to maintain the regularity of episodic releases for its no-monthly-fee MMO *Guild Wars - Nightfall* being the newest upcoming addition. Like the recently released *Factions* chapter, *Nightfall* is a stand-alone product that can be played without owning any of the other *Guild Wars* chapters, or it can be played in conjunction with previous chapters. Characters and items can freely move from one chapter to another, and back. While *Factions* introduced little in the way of new features, other than some new mission types, much improved campaign flow as well as two new characters, *Nightfall* is set to make much more of a splash.

In this third campaign, players are tasked to fight back the night "... as a mad ruler attempts to free an outcast god and bring darkness to the continent of Elona." Two new character classes, the scythe-wielding Dervish and holy Paragon, are being introduced, along with the entirely new customisable Heroes functionality. Players won't have to fight alone, because they can now gain Heroes that follow player instructions in combat (unlike the Hirelings found in *Prophecies* and *Factions*), as well as use skills and equipment of the player's choosing. These Heroes are a much-needed addition, especially for players who have a hard time finding groups to do missions with. The Heroes will be limited to the *Nightfall* campaign, but will stay with players forever until dismissed, following the player(s) through ancient monuments, savage coasts, and poisonous deserts. Once again, an overarching epic plot spans the missions (twenty in total), augmented by hundreds of new additional questions.

On the PVP side of things, players can now also challenge one-on-one alongside their Heroes in the new Hero vs. Hero Battles. Players can group with a custom team of Heroes and fight against other players from around the world and their customised groups of Heroes.

Once again, this new chapter in the *Guild Wars* saga is an entirely new location to explore, with its own set of creatures, quests, and items to discover. The African-themed deserts, badlands, highlands, and lowlands are all exquisitely detailed and actually look much more polished than the first chapter, *Prophecies*. With each additional chapter, ArenaNet seems to improve, and one can only imagine what the next chapter may hold.

The recently held *Guild Wars Nightfall* event had players, fans, and newcomers playing and experiencing some of the new content in *Nightfall*, including the new Hero feature. **NAG**





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## TRANSPARENCY, TRANSLUCENCY AND BLENDING

TRANSPARENCY EFFECTS IN GAMES ARE VERY IMPORTANT, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY MAKE GAMES LOOK GOOD, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE A UNIQUE SET OF PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMART DESIGNERS TO EXPLOIT. THIS IS BECAUSE TRANSPARENCY IS IMPLEMENTED USING A VERY VERSATILE BLENDING SYSTEM, WHICH CAN BE PUT TO USE IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS. . .

### TRANSPARENCY, THE FIRST METHOD

**B**ACK IN THE DAY when people manually blitted their sprites to screen memory (if you're too young to know what blitting means, Google can help with that curiosity), they used to pick a specific colour in the sprite and simply not draw anything to the screen when they encountered that colour. Thus a technique called chroma keying was born!

Nowadays graphics APIs support chroma keying without the whole manual pixel colour check thing, which to be perfectly honest was a bit annoying to do. However, chroma keying does have a downside in modern applications. Things like bilinear filtering (remember last month's texture filtering article?) will 'blur' individual pixel colours together, so you'll end up with the edge pixels in your texture having some of the chroma colour bled into them, giving you a nasty 'halo' around your transparent object.

### TRANSLUCENCY AND THE ALPHA CHANNEL OF DOOM!

Hopefully many of you will have heard of the idea of 'alpha'. When we talk about textures and transparency, alpha refers to an extra channel per pixel. We already have red, green and blue channels that define the colour of a specific pixel in a texture or sprite. If we add another channel to that, we can really start doing some funky things.

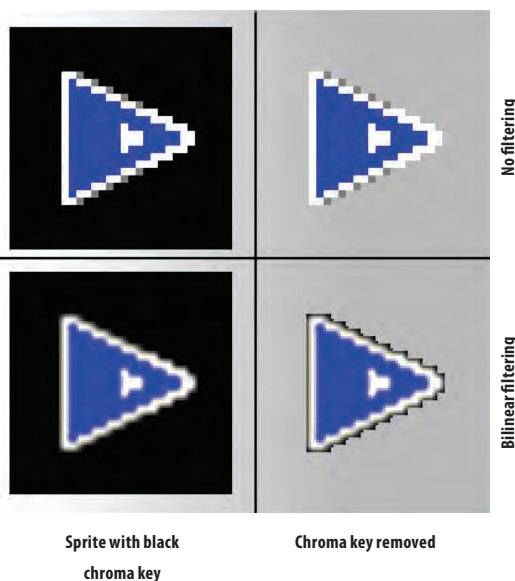
The simplest implementation of alpha is single-bit alpha. That

means that each pixel has an alpha value of either 1 or 0, which means it's either on (visible) or off (not visible). This may sound similar to chroma keying, but the major difference is in how the alpha information is used by graphics APIs.

Before we tell whichever API we're using (GL, DirectX, or any engine that uses either of those), to use a specific texture while it's rendering, we can specify a blending operation for it to perform while it's using that texture. Essentially, blending is all about controlling the final colour value of a pixel on screen by multiplying the source colour information (the colour that the system is trying to make the pixel, gotten from a sprite or texture) and the destination colour information (the colour that the screen pixel is already) in all sorts of different ways. The usual blending operation is to get the final colour on screen by multiplying the source colour by its alpha value, and adding the destination colour multiplied by 1 - the source's alpha. This gives us something similar to what you get by looking through a piece of coloured glass. The colour behind the glass is 'let through' by how transparent the glass is, while also being tinted by how un-transparent (opaque) the glass is. This means that an alpha value of 0 doesn't change the onscreen colour at all (i.e.: fully transparent, perfect glass) while an alpha of 1 doesn't let through any original onscreen colour at all and we only see the texture colour (i.e.: totally opaque, like a wall).

Now, if we give our alpha channel more bits, we make it possible for the alpha to have more values than just 0 and 1. This gives us wonderful, smooth, graduated translucency, just like our coloured glass example. Imagine looking through a red pane of glass that's half-transparent at a green field. Our source (the glass) has a colour value of S {red = 1, blue = 0, green = 0, alpha = 0.5} - this is called RGBA notation, I'll let you guess why. The grass behind it is represented by D {0, 1, 0, 1} because it's completely green and also completely opaque! So, using the blending operation we described above, we get our final colour by adding S multiplied by its alpha to D multiplied by 1 - S's alpha (this is called giving the inverse of a value, subtracting it from its possible maximum value).

So,  $F = (S * Sa) + (D * (1 - Sa))$   
 $= (S * 0.5) + (D * (1 - 0.5))$  : Substituting  $Sa = 0.5$   
 $= (S * 0.5) + (D * 0.5)$  : Calculating  $1 - 0.5$   
 $= (\{1, 0, 0\} * 0.5) + (\{0, 1, 0\} * 0.5)$ : Substituting S and D's colours  
 $= \{0.5, 0, 0\} + \{0, 0.5, 0\}$  : Multiplying out  
 $= \{0.5, 0.5, 0\}$  : Adding the colours together





Sprite:



Red + Green + Blue + Alpha



Final blend result

So our final value for F is {0.5, 0.5, 0}, giving us a half-red, half-green, mucky brown colour. Exactly what you would see if you looked through a red glass window at a green field, yay! Thankfully you don't have to do this type of calculation all the time, your graphics card is doing it millions of times per second for every pixel on screen, more yay!

Hopefully some of you will have realised that you need to have drawn the grass before drawing the red glass, otherwise all you'll see is the grass (if you can't figure out why, redo the calculation above and switch S and D around, to see what you get). This is called transparency ordering and is one of the nastier problems of 3D graphics, we'll get to it later after we've discussed other nifty things like Z buffering...

#### OTHER USES OF BLENDING

As I mentioned earlier, blending is done by your graphics card and defined by the blending operation you choose. The blending operation we've gone over so far is only one of many different possibilities. You define a blending operation by telling your API what values to multiply the source and destination colours by, so the operation we looked at above is blend (source alpha, inverse source alpha), this is the setting used to get "normal" transparency. Additive transparency is given by blend (source alpha, one) because we want the screen colour to be unchanged, we just want to add our source colour "on top" of it. The re-rendered blurred textures that give HDR (High Dynamic Range) effects their characteristic over-brightness are additively blended onto the original scene. You can even 'subtract' colours from an image using blending!

There are many different blending values that you can play around with: Destination alpha, inverse destination alpha, source/destination colour, inverse source/destination colour, maximum, one, zero, etc. Experiment and see what kinds of effects you can create. Blending is extremely versatile, some people even use blending to achieve advanced stencil and lighting effects, all it takes is a little thinking outside the box. **NAG**



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# RAGE 2006

THE FOURTH RAGE, THE LARGEST RAGE, THE BEST RAGE YET

"IT IS JUST INCREDIBLE!" one astonished woman succinctly exclaimed while her son continued to gawk at his surroundings. They had driven up from Margate, just to attend rAge for the first time. Standing at the center of the Coca-Cola Dome (right in the middle of the Xbox 360 stand), one could turn a full 360 degrees and get an entirely uninterrupted panorama of gaming, technology and crowds of people. rAge 2006 was bigger and better in more ways than one.

On a physical level, rAge was expanded to use 60% more floor space this year which meant that not only were there more exhibitors with bigger stands but the NAG LAN @ rAge was also increased to accommodate 1200 gamers and their rigs. Naturally this made the NAG LAN @ rAge one of the biggest lans to have ever hit South Africa (and possibly even Africa); at night the rows upon rows of fluorescent monitors created an elegant curve into the distance (and up the escalator to the upper part of the LAN area). The real heart of the show however was most certainly the Xbox 360 stand, a tall pillar of green light capped by screens facing every direction. The 360 stand had ample 360 demo units for gamers to play on, and included games such as Rockstar's Table Tennis, Dead Rising, Dead or Alive 4, Lego Star Wars 2, Project Gotham Racing 3 and many more. Spiraling outwards from the green glow of the 360 booth were stands for comics, computer hardware, anime, games of all shapes and sizes as well as a game development workshop.

Alongside the massive Animeworx booth with their plethora of goods, the anime theater screened current and selected anime movies and series, the beanbags a safe refuge for those who became too weary to walk anymore. In addition, this year saw notebooks, PC hardware, LCD monitors, networking equipment, gaming accessories, entertainment software, consoles,



This is what rAge looked like on day 1 of build-up ... and what it looked like on day 3 of the expo



The stage area played host to exhibition matches, prize giving, tons of free giveaways and various product demonstrations



MP3 players, PDAs and even Magic the Gathering cards on sale amidst the sea of consumer goods. Many wallets left rAge empty but in return kept arms and shopping bags full. Naturally, it wouldn't be rAge without giveaways and this year the national bird may have well been the free swag that was flung into the air from various stands. The Electronic Arts stand itself managed to create several flash mobs, massive groups of people reaching for the games, shirts and other goodies that were thrown, trapping any innocent bystanders with sheer numbers.

Highlighting the Friday night was the official launch of the Xbox 360 in South Africa (be sure to check out the 360 Insider supplement for more information about what happened at both the official launch party as well as the BT Games launch). Gamers enjoyed an unprecedented amount of playable games on the show floor this year, including multiplayer Dark Messiah of Might and Magic, the new F.E.A.R. expansion as well as Need for Speed Carbon, Neverwinter Nights 2, the locally-produced CRT: Tournament Edition, Test Drive Unlimited, Eragon, Sims 2: Pets, Microsoft Flight Simulator X, Smackdown vs Raw, FIFA 07 and Scarface. There was even a sneak peek from Games Emporium at the new Magic: The Gathering expansion, Time Spiral.

Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel was back at rAge this year to compete against the local gamers in Quake 4. He faced off against international all-girl gaming team "girls Of Destruction" (g.O.d.) and held several exhibition matches. In an extreme twist and surprise, competing US champion Rafiq "LoSt CaUzE" Bryant beat Fatal1ty in the Quake 4 tournament. Local pro player Stephen "Phantom" Cloete had a close match against Fatal1ty but ultimately taking a loss. A first prize of R5000 went to Cayden "EvilToaster" Bridgman for his entry into the Game.Dev competition that was held this year, where the goal was to create a management game. He took first place with his space fast-food management game, that could very well go the distance and become a retail game. The participation and involvement in this year's Game.Dev stand was exceptional, with hundreds of gamers stopping by to either listen in on the workshops, talk to the resident indie game developers or get some on the spot training with the various tools that can be used to make games.

That is, once people plucked their eyes from the bounty of booth babes that adorned the various stands at rAge. But all good things must end, and the final day of rAge saw many a content tired gamer dragging their feet out of the LAN area, monitors and rigs in tow. We hope to see everyone at rAge 2007, which can only be bigger and better once again. **NAG**

If performance hardware is your thing, then rAge was the place to see it in action



The flawless D-Link network, Intel servers and super-efficient VC crew made the NAG LAN one of the best that rAge has ever hosted



Booth babes – the staple of any good gaming expo





## V FOR VENDETTA

**Cast:** Natalie Portman, Hugo Weaving

**Director:** James McTeigue

**Genre:** Action/Thriller

**Rating:** 16 LV

**B**ASED ON THE DC Vertigo comic mini-series, it's a future not far from now, the UK is under the control of a government that is secretive and restrictive. But one figure, a man in a Guy Fawkes' mask, suddenly surfaces to stand against them. A young woman becomes involved when he rescues her from the government's goons and soon she finds herself in a whole different world.

**The Movie:** V for Vendetta is excellent and a great start for DC taking its Vertigo comics to the big screen. While Natalie Portman gets the top bill, Hugo Weaving as the masked V is excellent and the movie itself delivers a great payload. It's also a respectable treatment of the comic material, while the dark and moody story is probably even more relevant than ever. If



anything, hats and suits are suave again. Let the revolution begin!

**The DVD:** The only extra is a making-of, with not even a bit of commentary.

## HOSTEL

**Cast:** Jay Hernandez, Derek Richardson

**Director:** Eli Roth

**Genre:** Horror

**Rating:** 18 VLNS

**T**HREE BACKPACKERS GET A juicy piece of travelling advice from a stranger in the Netherlands: a hostel in East Europe where the women are sexy, horny and love foreigners. Naturally, the three guys can't resist, but it turns out to be the biggest mistake of their lives when they are hunted.

**The Movie:** There are two kinds of people who will watch Hostel: the people who've seen some heavy-weight shock films and the people who haven't. Hostel might seem a bit sparse for the former, but the latter will find it intense and grotesque. It's a rubbish movie for a lot of reasons, but a great piece of shock cinema. Despite the terrible dialogue, Hostel never forgets what it is supposed to be, thus delivering ample sex, nudity and gore, not to mention a Takashi Miike cameo. But be warned it's not for the faint-hearted or squeamish.



**The DVD:** Commentary, a making-of and a few multi-angle shots for more terror.



## CB4

**Genre:** Comedy

**Rating:** 18 SNL

Three rappers are the hottest new thing on the hip-hop circuit, but during the making of a documentary, the real story comes out. Soon CB4 is dodging a crazy gangster whose identity they sort of stole. This screwball comedy is a must-see for any Chris Rock fans curious about his earlier work. It also makes a lot of fun of hip-hop, a topic the film keeps close to its heart. If anything, it's a comedy classic that not that many people outside of the US have seen. Keepin' it real, yo!

**Features:** Nothing, not even a complete version of the CB4 music video.



## 16 BLOCKS

**Genre:** Thriller

**Rating:** 13 V

A veteran cop is tasked with delivering a witness from his holding cell to the court house 16 city blocks away. But if he didn't take the job seriously, he soon does when the bad guys waste no time trying to kill the witness. Soon the duo are in deep trouble and making it to the court will be a lot harder than they thought. 16 Blocks is not a great action thriller, but it's not a bad movie in the end. The finale is worth seeing and Willis plays his role well. Even Mos Def's nasal whine becomes endearing after a while. But the movie is also, ultimately, not going to hang around your head for too long.

**Features:** The DVD contains an alternative ending, which is quite different to the one in the movie.



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## Ultimate Iron Man Vol.1

**Format:** Graphic Novel

**Publisher:** Marvel

**Writer:** Orson Scott Card

**Pencils:** Andy Kubert

**Retail Price:** R139.95

**F**OLLOWING THE STANDARDS OF quality artwork and gripping stories that all the previous Marvel Ultimate series have utilised, Ultimate Iron Man Vol.1 will keep you entertained and wanting more. The story begins with the events leading to how Tony Stark's (aka Iron Man) parents met, and the unusual circumstances surrounding his own birth. By the time you finish reading the trade paperback, which includes the first five issues of the ongoing series, you will have learned of Tony's early years, the origins of the Iron Man suit, and how he came to be head of the most powerful weapons' manufacturing company before he could even drive. In a word, this one is riveting.

## Spawn / Batman: Inner Demons

**Format:** Comic – 1 shot | **Publisher:** Image | **Writer:** Todd McFarlane | **Artist:** Todd McFarlane / Greg Capullo | **Retail Price:** R45

**I**T WAS OVER A decade ago when Image comic's backbone character, Spawn, met DC's legendary Batman. It was a brutal encounter. Now, years later, Todd McFarlane (creator of *Spawn*) is bringing these two giants in the comic industry together again, for what promises to be an epic crossover, with a twist. When these two worlds collide, and the carnage and madness ensue, these two great heroes will have to face each other's worst enemies. You'd better hold on tight for this ride!

## Phantom Volume 1

**Format:** Manga | **Publisher:** Tokyopop | **Creator:** Ki-Hoon Lee, Seung-Yup Cho  
**Retail Price:** R75

**U**SING MECHS, ROBOTS AND other machines to fight terrorists as part of a government anti-terrorist task force, Kay is unwittingly pulled into a conspiracy which goes sour, resulting in his partner becoming hospitalised with permanent damage. Kay is left reeling at the lack of support the organisation he has given his life to have shown during his attempt to do his duty. As he withdraws from fighting for what he believes in, he meets others, who like him are committed to stop at nothing in their fight against evil. Now, with his new private group supporting him, Kay returns to the battle.

## Hellgate London

**Format:** Comic – 4 Part Mini Series (Preview – not yet released) | **Publisher:** Dark Horse | **Writer:** Ian Edginton | **Artist:** Steve Pugh | **Retail Price:** R23

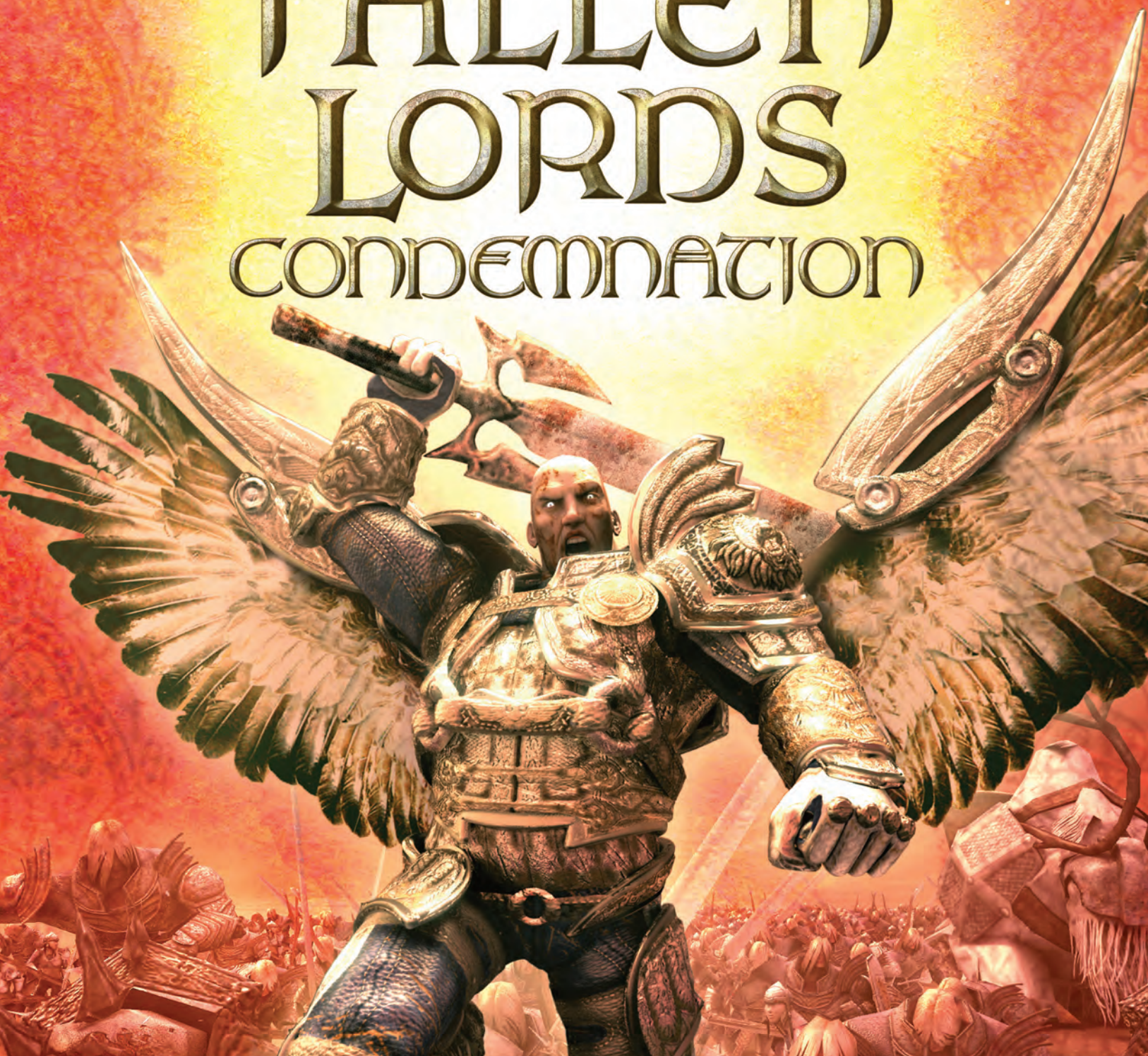
**Y**OU'VE EXPERIENCED THE HYPE surrounding the release of the game *Hellgate: London*, and you're itching for a *Diablo 2* style game that offers the same addictive gameplay. And why not, it's one of the most anticipated and talked about gaming events of the year. And it's with that in mind that Dark Horse comics collaborated with Flagship Studios to bring the world of a demon-invaded London on the brink of destruction to life in comic book form. With outstanding artwork from Steve Pugh (known the world over for his work in *Preacher*), and a gripping story told by Ian Edginton, with Flagship overseeing the project in every aspect, this is guaranteed to be a great read!





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# THE RAVEN'S LOFT



WELCOME BACK TO LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE... OR IS IT NEXT MONTH'S? WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE TIME SPIRAL MAGIC EXPANSION, IT CAN BE HARD TO TELL. AND THIS SET IS ONE THAT HAS BROUGHT US SOME SURPRISES...

## LOST IN TIME

The basic theme behind Time Spiral is temporal chaos – time rifts are constantly (is that even a correct term, in the context of temporal turmoil?) opening in Dominaria, and people, creatures, things and spells are falling through them. Some arrive from the past, some from the future – and, presumably, some are disappearing from the present and into other times. Although, as a story, this concept is just fine, the reality of how it has been implemented is something else entirely – and utterly fantastic.

For the past couple of years, Wizards of the Coast's R&D department has been fine-tuning what is known as the colour pie. Various abilities have been redistributed among the five colours of Magic, and some of the new definitions are completely at odds with some older cards. Some of you have no doubt noticed how, for example, white's Disenchant has been given to green instead, in the form of Naturalize, and how red now holds jurisdiction over mana-boosting instants, so goodbye Dark Ritual, hello Seething Song. There have been several such changes, and the response to them has been mixed. On the whole, people seem to prefer the new distribution, or at least understand that it makes sense. However, on the other hand, veteran players miss some of the old givens, particularly those that had become iconic, such as white's Disenchant.

## GREATEST HITS

Time Spiral turns all of that on its head, in two ways. Firstly, many old cards' basic functionality is being revisited in new ways. A perfect example of this is the cycle of Magi. The Magus of the Disk, for instance, is essentially a Nevinyrral's Disk in the form of a creature, while the Magus of the Scroll is a creature with the ability of a Cursed Scroll. The other, and far more surprising element, are this set's Timeshifted cards. This subset consists of 121 reprints



from various sets, complete with original frames and artwork, and spanning the entirety of Magic's history. Some of these cards contradict the modern conventions of the colour pie, a perfect example being Psionic Blast – folks, this card has most recently been printed as the (excellent) red card Char! Blue direct damage? We haven't seen that in years! A less extreme example is the (most welcome) Timeshifting of Disenchant.

So what's up with this, besides possibly a marketing ploy? Two theories spring directly to my mind. First, the set has very much a 'best of' feel to it, even though Wizards were careful to include a few lemons (for example, Squire) among the Timeshifted cards. However, it is also possible that this is an elaborate poll, to determine players' responses to the older concepts, and to establish whether any colour pie shifts, no matter how well-intentioned or logical, may have turned out to be mistakes now in need of re-evaluation.



## INCREASING RETURNS

One extremely welcome aspect of this set is a subtle shift in card rarities. For starters, each Time Spiral booster contains a Timeshifted card, and many of these are rares, which means that often you'll be seeing two rares in the same pack. "But wait – that's not all!" Wizards of the Coast has changed its policy on premium cards ('foils' – the shiny, metallic cards that show up from time to time). No longer does a 'foil' replace its rarity slot in a booster pack, but rather, a 'foil' will always take up the slot of a common card. This means it is theoretically possible to pull three rares in one pack! Although Timeshift is unique to Time Spiral, the new premiums policy is not – so even after this set, players will occasionally find two rares in a pack. It is good to see a company give a little back to its customer community – after all, some of us have spent much money on this most addictive of games!



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# WAVE OF THE CONSOLES

## Part 1

This year (and early next year thanks to Blu-ray diode problems) we'll be seeing a new generation of consoles. These machines will inspire awe, wonder, joy, and endless fan boy flamewars for the next half a decade or so. Manufacturers promise many things new and shiny, every developer promises the moon and a revolutionary experience that will change your life thrown in for free, and everyone wonders how much they'll have to shell out to play the next sequel of their favourite series. But while the hardware is new, and the games are new (if not necessarily original), the rivalries are old, and the forces that drive them are older still. So to understand the past of videogame consoles, we need to take a look at how consoles have been in the past. Let's take a trip back to a simpler time, when "3D" was something you watched in the theatre with funny coloured glasses, and "counter strike" was something you did to get the cap off a stubborn bottle.

**"Those who cannot  
learn from history are  
doomed to repeat it."  
– George Santayana**







With the game console market, there are many factors that may determine success or failure. Individual events and timing may make or break a company. However, most of the significant influences on the success or failure of a console can be grouped into a few categories, so we have simplified things for ease of understanding. The categories are:

**1. CPU POWER** – The measure of how much raw number crunching muscle a console has. RAM size and speed is taken into account.

**2. GRAPHICS AND SOUND** – Basically what it says, how well a console can present games, how much 'WOW' factor it has. We'll only be comparing consoles from similar periods with each other, so what was good at a certain stage may be positively awful a few years later.

**3. SOFTWARE** – Quantity, quality, availability. Without games, it might as well be a doorstop.

**4. MARKETING STRATEGY AND LAUNCH CONDITIONS** – Basically how the company played its cards in selling the system. Did they do it right, or fumble horribly?

**5. UNIQUE FEATURES** – That X factor that some consoles bring. Basically anything nifty or unusual that the console featured or supported. Each console will get a rank in each category, Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, or Awful.

## ROUND 1: DO SOMETHING!

Some of us who don't want our age to show, might say they do not remember the early days of the first consoles. They go back quite far, but we'll start with the first relatively popular machine, the Atari Video Computer System, later known as the Atari 2600.

Atari had a significant launch lead, starting in 1977. They roughly doubled sales every year through 1982. Intellivision didn't appear until three years later. The games were simple, the graphics were primitive, the console was expensive (\$199 at the time), but it was still wonderful. The 2600 lagged far behind the other consoles of its time in terms of power and graphics, but killer titles came in the form of ports of arcade hits such as *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders*. Being the only game in town (quite literally in some cases) helped a lot to establish Atari's dominance early on.

Intellivision launched into the market in 1980 at an even more expensive \$299, bundled with *Las Vegas Blackjack*. Contrary to popular belief (and later marketing campaigns), the Intellivision was the first 16-bit console, running at all of 895Khz. It still put the smack down on the Atari in terms of CPU power and graphics though. It had some



Atari 2600



Intellivision



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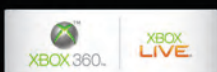
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interesting little toys like a voice synthesizer, but the big downfall was the planned keyboard unit designed to turn it into a 'full fledged' home computer. When the upgrade was promised but not shipped, the Federal Trade Commission got called in to investigate, and Intellivision suffered. Despite this, it holds the number two slot for longest lived console, at 12 years. This was mainly due to the large number of titles (about 125), several of which sold over a million units.

Colecovision was the powerhouse of 1982. Its amazing 3.6Mhz CPU and 8K of RAM, combined with the unprecedented 256 x 192 resolution made it the prettiest thing on the block. It launched with 12 titles, and 10 more shown in development. Eventually 170 games would be produced for the system. Colecovision's killer app was *Donkey Kong*, and from its launch in August to the end of 1982 it sold half a million units, and then another six million before being discontinued in 1984 after the big videogame crash. It never quite matched the Atari 2600 in popularity, though if the industry hadn't taken such a fall, it might have. It had some pretty interesting peripherals too, one which could make it play Atari's games, a steering wheel and gas pedal, and even a laserdisc ROM expansion that could play a port of *Dragon's Lair*. This was a bit of a mistake, as Coleco paid \$2 million up front for the rights to *Dragon's Lair*, but then folded before the game was even fully ported.

The odd one out of the early generation was the Vectrex. There was nothing like it before and there has been nothing like it since. Everything about it was weird, from the 8-bit RISC CPU to the built in 9-inch black and white screen mounted portrait (taller than it is wide), to the crisp vector graphics only seen in arcade games like the original *Star Wars Arcade*. Vectrex had an analogue joystick, a 4-button controller, and add-ons such as a light pen and a really weird 3D viewing headset that worked sort of like a Viewmaster to produce colour and 3D images. However, it wasn't marketed well and never became popular with developers, and sadly only had a few second-rate knockoffs of some of the more popular arcade titles of the time. Still, it was the precursor of portable consoles as it didn't need a TV.



Colecovision



Vectrex

RANKINGS	ATARI 2600	INTELLIVISION	COLECOVISION	VECTREX	LEADER
CPU	POOR	FAIR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	COLECO
GRAPHICS/SOUND	AWFUL	FAIR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	COLECO
SOFTWARE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD	AWFUL	ATARI 2600
STRATEGY	EXCELLENT	FAIR	GOOD	POOR	ATARI 2600
FEATURES	FAIR	AWFUL	EXCELLENT	GOOD	COLECO

WINNER OF THIS ROUND: ATARI 2600 (MASSIVELY)





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Internal -	6 x 3.5"	
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## ROUND 2: THE NES'D GENERATION

In 1983, two significant things happened in the gaming industry. The first was the infamous videogame crash in the US, where a combination of lower priced home computers and a flood of low-quality third-party games for consoles caused many companies to go bankrupt and collapse the entire videogame industry. The second was that a small playing card company in Japan had a vision of the future, and that vision was videogames. This company would do more to create that future than any other. They released a machine called the "Famicom", short for family computer, and after some success, released a version in the devastated US market in 1985 renamed the Nintendo Entertainment System.

The NES was not alone in the market, though it would eventually gain a near monopoly 95% claim on the industry. It was not the most powerful or innovative console of its day, but it grew a large library of high-quality games from both internal Nintendo developers and third-parties, whom Nintendo ruled with an iron fist to keep standards from falling like they did in the previous generation. The NES had many strange and mostly useless peripherals, such as the ROB, a strange robot with gyroscopes, and the extremely cool but impractical PowerGlove (it's so bad). The only add-on that sold reasonably well was the light gun, which was eventually bundled with later versions of the NES that included hybrid *Super Mario Brothers/Duck Hunt* cartridges.

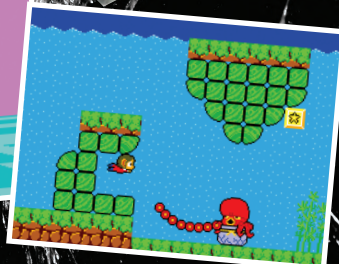
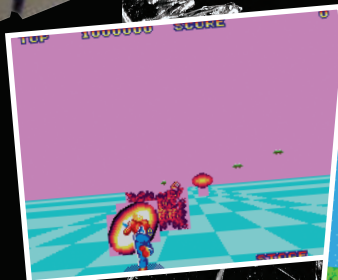
Atari was not dead at this time, but they were quite confused. They attempted to launch a new system called the Atari 7800 in 1984, then discontinued it two months later. When the NES achieved success they attempted to relaunch it in 1986, but this strategy confused customers and left developers sceptical of Atari's commitment to the machine. The 7800 proved extremely



NES



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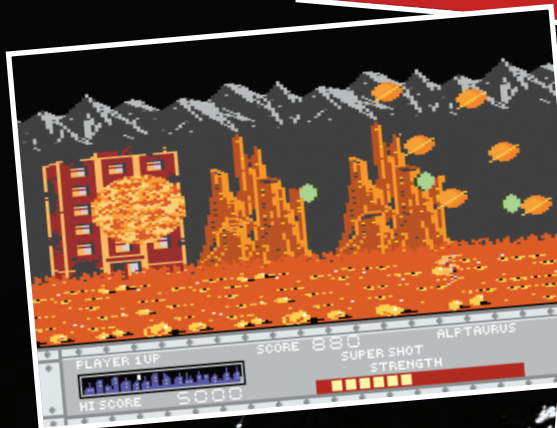
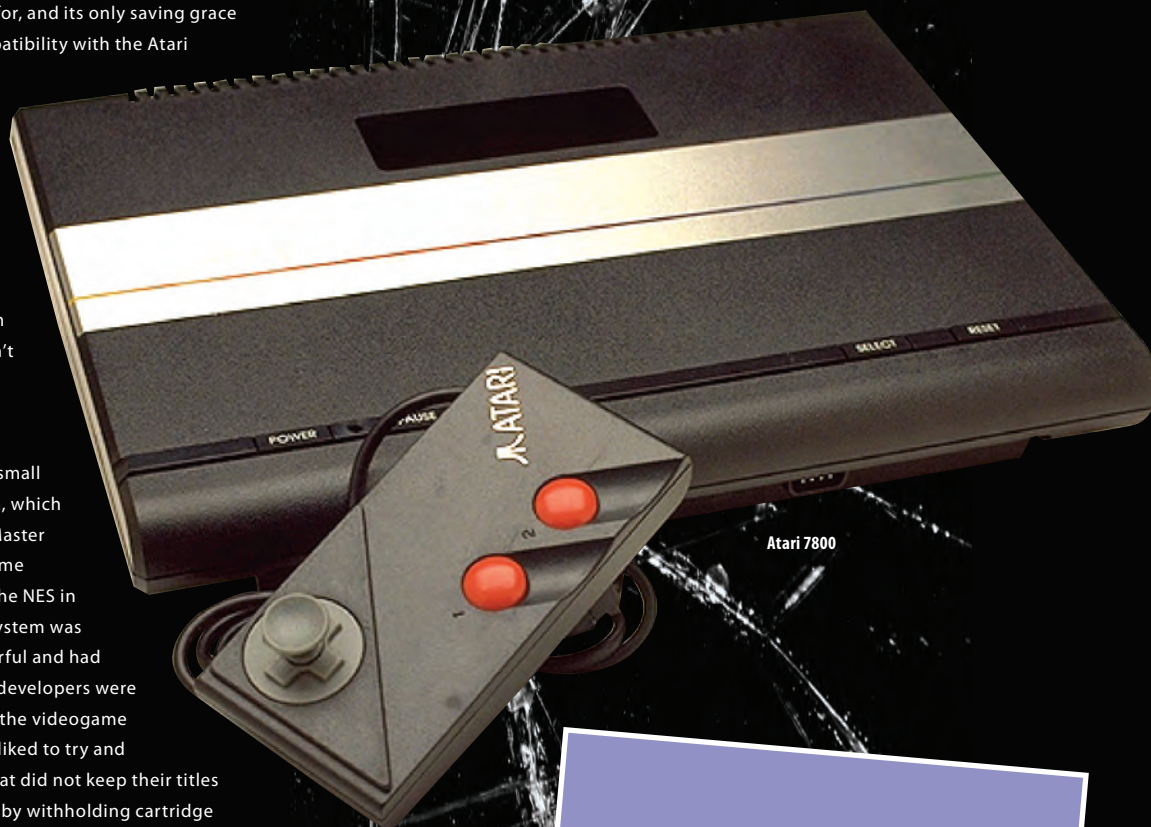
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difficult to program for, and its only saving grace was backwards compatibility with the Atari 2600. Atari talked of producing keyboards, disk drives, and printers that would let the 7800 become a fully-fledged computer, but never made them after the market didn't respond well to the machine.

Nintendo's only potential rival was a small company called Sega, which produced the Sega Master System around the time Nintendo launched the NES in the US. The Master System was arguably more powerful and had better graphics, but developers were still wary because of the videogame crash, and Nintendo liked to try and punish companies that did not keep their titles exclusive to the NES, by withholding cartridge supplies and other nasty tactics. So Sega was mostly stuck with ports of their own arcade games. It was a shame, as the SMS had some cool features, such as LCD shutter 3D glasses that were extremely impressive for their time.

The early childhood of home gaming was a rocky one, with a crash that nearly killed the industry in its infancy. It was mainly the determination of Nintendo that brought it back from the edge of extinction. In both early generations, the machine with the worst performance became the dominant player due to better (and more) games and smarter tactics. We'll see if this trend continues when we explore the next few generations of consoles next month. **NAG**



RANKINGS	NES	SEGA MS	ATARI 7800	LEADER
CPU	FAIR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	SMS
GRAPHICS/SOUND	AWFUL	GOOD	EXCELLENT	ATARI 7800
SOFTWARE	EXCELLENT	FAIR	POOR	NES
STRATEGY	EXCELLENT	FAIR	AWFUL	NES
FEATURES	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR	SMS

**WINNER OF THIS ROUND: NES (OVERWHELMINGLY)**





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# GAME OVER

## EPILOGUE THANK GOD IT'S OVER

AS THE DUST SETTLES and the wounded are removed (those giveaway flash-mobs can be lethal), a certain calm after the storm sets in around the NAG office, once the final rAge exhibit is broken down and packed away. The intense lead-up and execution of rAge threatened to consume everyone involved, then suddenly it's gone. A rAge-shaped hole gets left in our hearts, but our heads (and backs) remind us that the last few months have been a grueling hell and we'd rather not ever do that again - until next year.

This year, rAge was bigger and better than ever before. The sheer number of LAN gamers was alone enough to make even the most hardened gaming cynic contemplate a quick game of *Warcraft*, *Counter-Strike: Source* or *Quake III*. The excitement and anticipation around the Xbox 360 certainly made it the belle of the ball, though naturally, the absence of anything PlayStation 3 or Wii left a few things to be

desired - but there's always next year.

And so as rAge 2006 fades into memory, everyone starts looking towards next year and the inevitable rAge 2007. A mix of apprehension and excitement fires up, and already we're wondering how we can make rAge bigger and better once more. Should the LAN be bigger? Should there be more booth babes? What about a circus? The possibilities are endless.



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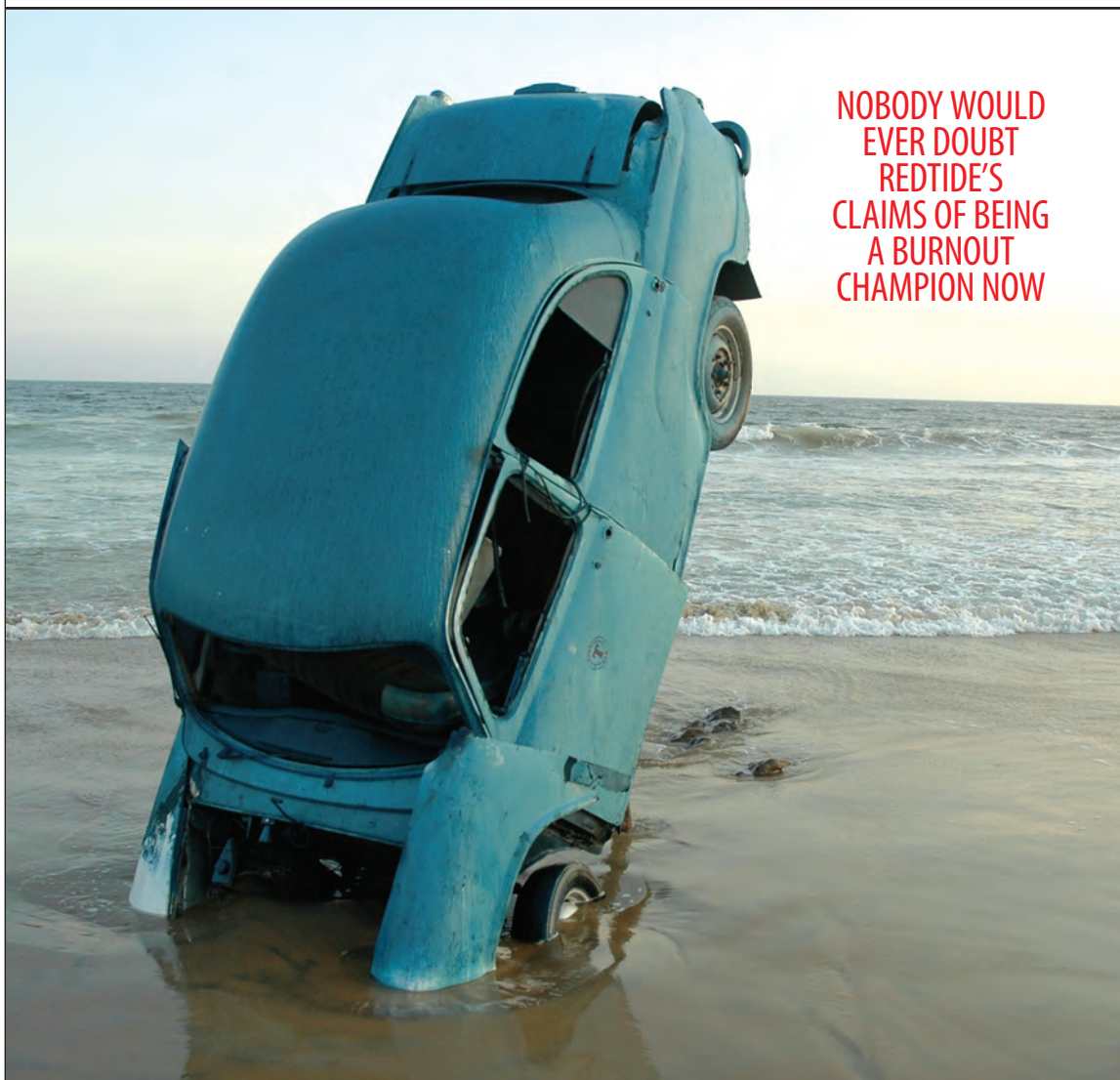
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